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The Late Victorian Theatre: as Reflected in 'The Theatre,' 1878-1897.

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THE LATE VICTORIAN THEATRE

AS REFLECTED IN THE THEATRE, 1878-1897

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ABSTRACT

The Theatre magazine, the most highly regarded British dramatic periodical of its time, flourished as a monthly journal from August, 1878, through December, 1897. Despite changes in editorship, the periodical's primary emphasis was consistently upon the varied aspects of the British theatre: the drama, criticism, personalities, history, the audience, and management. Papers contributed to the magazine by the most prominent actors, critics, managers, and other dramatic authorities gave it unusual substance and prestige. Taken as a whole, The Theatre provides a highly illuminating historical picture of the numerous facets of the late Victorian theatre, a period of great significance in British dramatic history.

This study is devoted to a descriptive analysis of certain major aspects of the late Victorian theatre as reported in The Theatre from July, 1878, through December, 1897. The thirty-nine volumes of the magazine have furnished the primary source of material, with certain supplementary sources utilized as required.

The first chapter gives a kaleidoscopic picture of the magazine as a whole, with a description of its salient features as treated by each of its editors. The second chapter consists of a descriptive analysis of four major themes in the periodical which concerned the theatre itself. These are: the make-up and conduct of the audience; the merits of a proposed subsidised theatre; the worth of a proposed dramatic academy; certain problems in playwriting. Similarly, the

third chapter comprises a descriptive analysis of the relationships of the Stage and four potent social forces: The Church; Government Censorship; the Press as represented by the dramatic critics; and Society. The fourth chapter consists of a critical examen of the advent of Henrik Ibsen's plays upon the British stage and their subsequent far-reaching effects.

The Theatre witnessed numerous changes in the development of the stage. Among those noted were changes in the composition and attitudes of audiences, attributable in part to a decrease in the prejudice toward the acted drama. Pressing problems involving theatre patrons centered about the pit, theatre etiquette, and the issuing of passes. Also observed were the increasingly friendly relations between the Stage and the Church, and between the Stage and Society. The most momentous change of all, however, was the emergence of the British drama of thesis, given its greatest impetus by the realism of the social dramas of Henrik Ibsen.

Major controversies during the period covered by the magazine centered about dramatic writing, criticism, government censorship, a proposed subsidised theatre, and a proposed dramatic academy. The merits and demerits of the issues raised in the course of the debates on these subjects were faithfully chronicled in The Theatre.

The Theatre, therefore, is valuable to the present-day dramatic student because it is an accurate mirror of the late Victorian stage in all of its aspects.

INTRODUCTION

Robert W. Lowe, a well known dramatic authority, writing in 1888, commented on The Theatre magazine as follows:

> This is one of the most valuable of dramatic records. Giving, as it does, the full cast, date of production, etc. of every play of any importance, and giving also admirable portraits of actors, authors, and critics, it is in itself a complete history of the contemporary stage and will be, to coming generations, a work of priceless value. Sets are, even now, scarce, and bring high prices.[1]

Walter Graham, in his monumental survey of English literary periodicals, singled out The Theatre for specific comment:

> Among the legion of theatrical periodicals in the latter half of the century, The Theatre, a [sic] Monthly Review and Magazine (1877-1897) is distinguished not only by its longer life but also by the scope of its design. . . . In the 'eighties and 'nineties, The Theatre was unquestionably a periodical of dominating prestige and influence. In fact, not one among those which have flourished since seems to command quite the same respect from readers or support from the great actors of the age.[2]

The Theatre was founded in January, 1877, as a "weekly critical review," and continued as a weekly until July, 1878. Beginning with August, 1878, however, it became a monthly with the subtitle "A Monthly Review and Magazine." In its twenty years of existence the editorship of the magazine changed hands from time to time. Yet its primary

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[1]Robert W. Lowe, A Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), p. 333.

[2]Walter Graham, English Literary Periodicals (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1930), pp. 354-355.

emphasis was consistently upon the varied aspects of the theatre: the drama, criticism, personalities, history, the audience,and management. As Graham suggested, articles on such subjects contributed by the prominent actors, managers, critics, and theatrical historians of the day gave this magazine "an unusual substance." Taken as a whole, the contents of The Theatre give the reader of today a highly illuminating historical picture of the numerous facets of the late Victorian theatre.

From January, 1880, to June, 1893, inclusive, the scope of the periodical was enlarged to encompass not only the drama, but also the fine arts and music. Consonant with this change, the subtitle during those years was "A Monthly Review of the Drama, Music, and the Fine Arts." Although The Theatre's coverage of music and the fine arts was not so thorough as its treatment of the drama, nevertheless the music and fine arts sections furnish some enlightening information about the artistic tastes of the late Victorians.

In July, 1893, in accord with another change in editorship, the magazine returned to its first subtitle, "A Monthly Review and Magazine," and its scope was once again limited exclusively to aspects of the drama.

The period in which The Theatre flourished was one of revolutionary changes in the British drama, marked primarily by the ascendance of Ibsenian realism. The years 1878-1897 also saw important changes in theatre audiences; in the social standing of the players; and in the attitudes of important institutions like the Church toward the Stage. In the light of these circumstances, it is surprising that studies are lacking in so many areas of the late Victorian theatre.

Studies have been made of only three critics of the time: George Bernard Shaw, William Archer, and Arthur Bingham Walkley. Of the playwrights of the period, investigations have dealt with Arthur Wing Pinero, George Bernard Shaw, Henry Arthur Jones, and Oscar Wilde. Of studies concerned with miscellaneous subjects, one may be cited on the nineteenth century audience; several on stage illumination; and one each on scenic design, acting, and directing, respectively. Heretofore no studies have been made on the numerous theatrical periodicals of the era.

The purpose of the present investigation, therefore, is to describe and analyze certain major aspects of the late Victorian theatre as seen in one of the most highly regarded drama periodicals of the time, The Theatre. This study is limited to the period in which the magazine ran as a monthly--July, 1878, through December, 1897, the date of its demise. The thirty-nine volumes of The Theatre have served as the primary source of material, although supplementary sources have been utilized as required. Since the magazine's volume numbers do not run consecutively from I to XXXIX, it will be more convenient to cite references to The Theatre by month, date, and page number, e.g., July, 1879, 3-4. Whenever possible such citations will be included in the text.

The Theatre abounds in so much valuable source material that it would be impossible to include all that it contains in one study. Accordingly, the present investigation will be conducted along the following lines. The first chapter will present the essence of the magazine as a whole, describing its salient features as treated by each of the editors. The second chapter will make a descriptive

analysis of four major themes in the periodical which concern the theatre itself: the audience; a proposed subsidised theatre; a proposed dramatic academy; the dramatists. Similarly, the third chapter will make a descriptive analysis of the relationships of the Stage and four potent social forces: the Church; Government Censorship; the Press; and Society. The fourth and last chapter will examine critically the advent of Henrik Ibsen's plays upon the British stage and their subsequent effects, as described in The Theatre. It is hoped that the present investigation will bring certain nebulous features of the late Victorian theatre into sharper focus.

In his study of the Athenaeum, Leslie A. Marchand remarked:

> . . . I must acknowledge considerable indebtedness to those who have done the pioneering, especially to Walter Graham, who has plowed widely and deeply in his English Literary Periodicals (1930), and Tory Criticism in the "Quarterly Review" (1921). Other studies of nineteenth century periodicals already published include: Leigh Hunt's Examiner Examined (1928), by Edmund Blunden; The Story of the Spectator (1928), by William Beach Thomas; Benthamite Reviewing: Twelve Years of the Westminster Review, 1824-1836 (1934), by Miriam M. H. Thrall; and The Party of Humanity: the Fortnightly Review and its Contributors, 1865-74 (1939), by Edwin M. Everett. A history of the Saturday Review by Merle M. Bevington is now nearing completion, and it is probable that other Victorian periodicals will stand for their portraits soon.[3]

It is hoped that the present study of The Theatre, a Victorian periodical of the drama, will be a fitting supplement to the studies mentioned above.

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[3]Leslie A. Marchand, The Athenaeum: A Mirror of Victorian Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), pp. vii-viii.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

This chapter is intended to present an overview of the thirty-nine volumes which The Theatre magazine encompasses. A chronological account of the magazine's history will be accompanied by a description of the salient features of the periodical as they varied with the changes in editorship.

The First Years under Hawkins: August, 1878, to December, 1879

The Theatre was founded in January, 1877, as a weekly magazine, but in August, 1878, it emerged as a monthly with the appropriate subtitle, "A Monthly Review and Magazine." For reasons unrevealed, the editor chose not to disclose his name. Though this desire for anonymity may seem unusual today, nineteenth century writers frequently published articles and reviews unsigned. Leslie Marchand, for instance, points out that without access to a marked file, "the indispensable source for the identification of reviewers, almost all anonymous," he could scarcely have completed his study of criticism in the Athenaeum, a contemporary of The Theatre.[1]

Careful study has brought to light only one casual--indeed too casual--reference to the mysterious first editor of The Theatre. This

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[1]Leslie A. Marchand, The Athenaeum: A Mirror of Victorian Culture (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), p. ix.

reference is found in the July, 1888, number, some eight years after Clement Scott had succeeded to the editorship. An article on the French stage began as follows:

> Mr. Hawkins, the celebrated author of the Life of Edmund Kean; [sic] an astute critic, an accurate historian, and for a long time the editor as well as founder of The Theatre magazine, has once more laid us under a deep obligation to him.
> (July, 1888, 18)

This is helpful, but the "celebrated" Mr. Hawkins' first name was not mentioned. Further investigation reveals him to be Frederick W. Hawkins, described by Lowe as journalist, author and "a well known writer on theatrical subjects, who for some years edited the [sic] Theatre."[2]

The first monthly issue of The Theatre covered 94 pages, 5 1/2" by 8 1/2" in dimension, with margins slightly over one-half inch all the way around. The first number was fairly pleasing in appearance, its print being thoroughly readable, though not excessively large.

There was considerable variety in the content of the magazine, and consonant with its title, the articles pertained to some aspect of the theatre, including musical productions. A brief description of the contents of the first number may indicate the quality and make-up of the magazine. The lead article was entitled "Our Stage: Its Present and Its Probable Future." This was followed by articles on "A Subsidised Theatre for London" and on "The Opera Season, 1878." All three articles were unsigned. Then came a short poem, "An Old

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[2]Robert W. Lowe, A Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature (London: John C. Nimbo, 1888), p. 165.

Stager," by Henry S. Leigh, which in turn was followed by "Portraits."[3] The first of them was of Miss Ellen Terry. It gave a resumé of her roles in addition to a critique of her performance as Portia in The Merchant of Venice. Interestingly, the writer appreciated Miss Terry, but not to the point of infatuation.

> The regular features, of no rare beauty, became singularly fascinating, as change of expression indicated the varying emotions of suspense, fear, relief, delight. The form, of no unique perfection, seemed from classic gracefulness of pose to be that of a very Roman lady such as sculptors would perpetuate; and the contralto voice, though at times unmusical, sounded in its depth and soothing cadences grateful to ears long familiar only with the monotonous piping from the shrill soprani of self-promoted soubrettes.
>
> (August, 1878, 16)

Under the caption The Round Table, there were seven signed articles dealing with random theatrical subjects. The popular actor E. A. Sothern selected "Reminiscences" as his subject; the critic Frank Marshall chose "The Drama of the Day in Its Relation to Literature"; and Henry Hersee wrote about "Madame Patti as an Actress." The tone and structure of these short articles varied widely, depending upon the nature of the subject matter and upon the whim of the individual writer. Thus Sothern's article was light and amusing, whereas those of Marshall and Hersee were more serious. On the other hand, Kate Field, another of the Round Table contributors, offered a rather sardonic suggestion for the treatment of actors in extremis by applying a variation of the Oneida Community's "'Criticism Cure'" as advanced

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[3]A photograph apparently accompanied this tribute to Miss Terry. However, in the copy available to this writer, the portrait is missing, as is that of Henry Irving.

in the American Socialist.

> A great tragedian is at death's door. . . . The Theatre is placed before them. They hear for the first time of the "Criticism Cure." They send for all the available actors who play the same line of business. They are admitted separately to the sick man's bedside, the least critical going first, the most violent going last. The patient is gradually restored to consciousness, and by the time the last pill is administered every pore opens, throws off disease, and the stage retains its brightest ornament. (August, 1878, 35)

The history of the theatre was not forgotten either, for Frederick Hawkins presented a scholarly discussion of "Shakspere [sic] in Blackfriars." In fine, the Round Table gave the reader a series of historical, critical, or humorous articles on the theatre, written by men and women generally well known in their respective fields.

Next came the second of the "Portraits," the subject this time being Henry Irving. "The most popular tragedian of our time lives in a busy West-end thoroughfare, within easy distance of club-land," began the writer chattily, and then described the contents of the actor's "favourite room." Irving fans who were unsettled to read that their idol lived amidst "a scene of confusion," probably found consolation in being assured that it was "not without a certain charm of its own." From a description of the room, the writer went on to discuss Irving's acting." . . . Genius of a high order belongs to the subject of this hasty sketch," he assured his readers. (August, 1878, 43-44)

The Theatre also contained fiction. "The Day Will Come," a three-part novelette by Joseph Hatton, a popular writer of the day, began in the first issue. However, the literary quality of this, and subsequent pieces of literature, was decidedly second-rate. The plots

were melodramatic; the themes sentimental; and the style commonplace. One possible reason--but only one--for the mediocre quality of The Theatre's fiction is that an association--tenuous though it might be--seemingly had to be made with the theatre. Hence, Hatton laid the scene of his novelette in "Pendleton's Gulch, Nevada," but managed to make his heroine an actress, though only a player of a "third-rate part." (August, 1878, 45-53) Hatton also contributed a fictional sketch in the Round Table, likewise of doubtful literary merit. (August, 1878, 29-33)

Five columns, entitled respectively, En Passant, At the Play, Echoes from the Green Room, Books, and Scraps, completed the magazine. En Passant consisted of a series of paragraphs, many dealing with the personal life of theatre people, including managers, dramatists, musicians, actors, and actresses. One such paragraph in the August issue disclosed that Madame Patti and her husband were both seeking divorces, with half of the singer's fortune at stake; another revealed the provisions of the late Charles Mathews' will; others recorded the deaths of various stage personalities. Additionally, there were items about Mark Twain, John Payne Collier, and Sarah Bernhardt, among others.

At the Play was subdivided into sections entitled In London; In the Provinces; In Paris; in Vienna; In Berlin; In Munich; In Rome; In Milan; In New York; In San Francisco; and In Australia. The theatrical highlights of the month in each of these cities were informally chronicled, apparently by a local correspondent. None of these reports was signed, however. From Vienna, for example, came news of the "unusual" dullness of the theatrical season, whereas from Paris, came tidings that the theatres there were "reaping a golden harvest." Some

of the remarks were critical rather than descriptive. The London correspondent dealt severely with a certain manager for allowing "his stage to be disgraced by the production of a play which, aiming to interest the lowest class of audience, would, by reason of its utter imbecility, be soundly hissed at the Victoria or the East of London." (August, 1878, 66)

Echoes from the Green Room was a column very much like the one called En Passant, except that its entries were much shorter, though no less "newsy." Madame Patti's financial affairs again proved irresistibly attractive, for here we learn that of the 140,000 pounds the star had earned since her marriage, 76,000 had been spent, and the remainder was in the hands of her husband. A few more "echoes" will suffice to give the reader an idea of their flavor and scope.

> Mr. Max Strakosch has been proceeded against for breach of promise of marriage. The plaintiff is a young milliner named Mary Smedley, who states that he promised in 1875 to marry her, but lately broke his word, for the reason that he was a Jew and she was a Christian. This inconceivable baseness caused her "great nervous prostration," and she claims $10,000 as damages. Mr. Strakosch was arrested, but having found bail started for England. (August, 1878, 82-83)

> The first anniversary dinner at the Green-Room Club was held on the 7th ult. at the Zoological Gardens, under the presidency of the Duke of Beaufort. Nearly a hundred members were present. There was but one drawback to the enjoyment of the evening. The singers were far from efficient. It is understood, however, that they were engaged at the instance of Mr. Sothern. (August, 1878, 81)

> It is believed that before long a dramatic version of Carmen will be produced in London. (August, 1878, 83)

Clearly, the reticence of the Victorians did not extend to their journalism.

As its title would suggest, Books was a section devoted to reviews of books, all of which were restricted to the subject of the drama. Here again, the connection was inclined at times to be tenuous; a volume of poems unrelated to the theatre, but written by the American drama critic, "Mr. Winter," and dedicated to the actor, Joseph Jefferson, was included among the selections reviewed. Those writing the notices remained anonymous, their passion for anonymity extending even to their treatment of certain authors. Nowhere in the review of Winter's book is his first name mentioned, nor is that of another author known only as "Mr. Gilman." This oversight would seem to have lessened the value of the reviews, and perhaps this was recognized, for in later issues during Hawkins' tenure, books reviewed were fully documented. The reviewers, however, clung tenaciously to their own anonymity.

The last column, Scraps, consisted of two items of historical interest, the first concerning new facts about a map mentioned in a Shakespearian play, the second giving a copy of a 1793 play-bill.

There were no advertisements in this maiden issue, but the September number contained four pages of them, largely devoted to The Theatre itself. The "photographic portraits of a distinguished actress and actor" were prominently featured as an attraction. Then came "opinions of the press" with direct quotations therefrom. Judging from these selected press comments, The Theatre was very favorably received. Particular attention was called to the excellence of the Woodbury-process portraits and to the high quality of the contributions in the magazine. The Figaro pronounced the first issue "a capital number," and the Brighton Standard found it "a well-digested compendium

of the history of the stage, dramatic and lyric." (September, 1878, ii-iii)

Further and more reliable evidence of the success of the first number can be found at the end of the October, 1878, issue, where the reprinting of the first number is announced. More and different "opinions of the press" were quoted, that of The Porcupine being of some significance.

> The Theatre [sic] in its new form has made a decided hit, and we are not surprised to hear that there is some difficulty in supplying the demand for it. The vivacity, humour, sarcasm, lucid reasoning, and pleasing chat which distinguished No. 1 are found to run through No. 2. . . . (October, 1878, iv)

With its second number, the form and arrangement of the periodical became fairly well crystallized. A few changes among the first features were made, but the basic form of the magazine was retained. The three lead articles, still unsigned, were incorporated under the heading of "The Watch Tower." Very likely the editor himself was responsible for this section, inasmuch as his personal opinions seem to be reflected in the style and subject matter. Thus an article on the prohibitive costs of going to the theatre concluded with the following observation:

> As it is, no one can, except a young bachelor, frequent the theatre for his amusement who is not either very comfortably off, or related to an acting-manager, or blessed with very primitive taste. That this should be so is a pity, and it will be a still greater pity if the tendency increases, for it will, from all points of view, be a bad day for the stage when the bulk of its support comes from the gallery and the stalls. (September, 1878, 102-103)

The column entitled Scraps was dropped beginning with the second issue. In the column At the Play, the number of reports from the various centers of dramatic activity varied from month to month. An In Madrid section was added to it. In November, 1878, a short story appeared in a new section called Feuilleton. The policy of running a serial was discontinued upon the completion of the first one. The column Books was renamed Literature, but did not appear every month. With the slight changes described above the form and arrangement of The Theatre were maintained through the December, 1879, number, the last under Hawkins' editorship.

In summary, during Hawkins' period of office the fiction was mediocre, but the non-fiction was of considerably higher calibre. The contributors to the Round Table continued to be men and women of some reputation in their own time, and in the case of some, in ours. Among those who wrote for the magazine might be mentioned: Henry Irving; Tom Taylor; E. L. Blanchard; Arthur Hallam; Bronson Howard; F. C. Burnand; W. Davenport Adams; Henry J. Byron; W. S. Gilbert; John Hollingshead; Moy Thomas; Dutton Cook; Jules Clarétie; and J. Palgrave Simpson. This list includes dramatists, critics, actors, and managers. The Round Table section became even more interesting when it included, as it did occasionally, a symposium on a controversial subject, with contributions from a variety of interested parties. In December, 1879, the topic for discussion was the proper interpretation of the character of Shylock in The Merchant of Venice. Heated symposium comment was aroused on another occasion by the subject of "new" and "original" plays. (April, 1879, 157-160) These discussions provide valuable insight into the character of Victorian thought.

"Captain" Clement Scott Assumes "Command": January, 1880, through December, 1889

Without any advance notice whatsoever, the January issue of The Theatre came out under the direction of a new editor, Clement Scott, and with a new subtitle indicative of the periodical's enlarged scope, "A Monthly Review of the Drama, Music, and the Fine Arts." Unlike the retiring Mr. Hawkins, Scott placed his name as editor in the masthead. With the change in editors a "New Series" of The Theatre began, the volume numbers starting with "I" again. Each volume covered six months.

Clement William Scott was probably the best known of the men who edited The Theatre. A man who had always been interested in the stage, Scott served as drama critic for The Daily Telegraph from 1871 to 1898, and concurrently in 1893, was also the critic for the Observer. After his stint for the latter, he served as critic for the Illustrated London News, at the same time retaining his post with The Daily Telegraph. Scott was the leading drama critic of his day, with the power to exert an extraordinary influence over the general public.[4] Mrs. Clement Scott writes somewhat perfervidly:

> His love and passionate worship for the stage was [sic] indeed so powerful that he compelled attention whenever he wrote about it, and created an enthusiasm which became not only contagious but infectious--and his following grew, until he absolutely voiced public opinion as regards things dramatical.
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[4]Dictionary of National Bibliography, Second Supplement, III, ed. Sir Sidney Lee (London: Smith Elder and Co., 1912), 276-277.

> . . . And nine hundred and ninety times out of every thousand his "followers" declared his judgment to be theirs.[5]

C. L. Hind, who was not "everything that a loyal biographer-widow should be," acknowledged: "No other dramatic critic has ever wielded the power of Clement Scott."[6]

Scott was not only a critic, but also a dramatist. He adapted a number of French plays for the English stage, among which were Off the Line, taken from a French farce, and The Vicarage, based upon Octave Feuillet's Le Village. In collaboration with B. C. Stephenson, he adapted Sardou's Nos Intimes, giving it the title Peril, and Sardou's Dora, calling it Diplomacy. The two adapters wrote under the pseudonyms of "Bolton Rowe and Saville Rowe." In later years Scott collaborated with the actor-manager Wilson Barrett to write Sister Mary.

Scott is credited with helping to gain popular acceptance of the dramas of Tom Robertson[7] and for helping to establish a picturesque style of dramatic criticism for the newspaper.[8] Scott's "first night" criticisms were published in his paper the very next morning, and were widely read. Hind says:

> I always bought The Daily Telegraph after an important first night. Thousands did likewise. "What does Clemmy say?" was the current question of the morning among my

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[5]Margaret Clement Scott (Mrs. Clement Scott), Old Days in Bohemian London (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1919), p. 7.

[6]C. Lewis Hind, More Authors and I (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., 1922), p. 253.

[7]Lowe, op. cit., p. 292.

[8]D.N.B., op. cit., p. 377. See also The Theatre, April, 1897, p. 197.

> friends who were interested in the theatre. . . . "The profession," as for some reason or another it was termed, was always much concerned as to what Clement Scott would say.[9]

Today we probably remember Scott--if at all--for his review of Ibsen's Ghosts, a play which he characterized as "a wretched, deplorable, loathsome history."

Under the new editor The Theatre changed in form and content, although far from completely. Whereas the size of its pages remained the same, the size of the print was reduced considerably. With respect to content, the symposium which had been irregularly appearing as a part of the Round Table was promoted to be the lead article. Then followed signed articles on a variety of subjects ranging from pantomime to "Growls from a Playwright." These were similar in both style and length to those which had been a part of the old Round Table. The high calibre of writers was generally maintained. The portraits with their accompanying sketches remained unchanged as far as the first issue was concerned. Nor was any improvement in the quality of the fiction perceptible.

It was in the matter of play reviews that Scott made the most radical changes. Now there was complete coverage of the plays produced in London, all of the London reviews being collected in a section entitled Our Play-Box. Each play was reviewed individually, and at the head of every notice the following data were listed: the title of the play; the theatre; the date of performance; the type of play; the

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[9]Hind, op. cit., p. 255.

author, who often was further identified by a listing of the other plays he had written; and the entire cast. This information, arranged in box fashion, was followed by the review of the performance, the length of the commentary varying with the play. Each of the reviews was signed or initialed.

Theatrical affairs in Paris in Scott's first issue were chronicled in a column called The Gay City over the signature of "The Bald-Headed Man." The writer made a distinct attempt to be chatty, gay, and intimate. "I am a flâneur, a lazy cosmopolitan idler," he confided cosily. (January, 1880, 44-46)

Yet another attempt at the light and humorous was made by the person who wrote about the drama in Berlin. The writer, however, tended toward whimsy, for his column, Theatrical Notes from Berlin, was signed "Hofrath Schneider's Ghost." Commenting on Berlin's enthusiasm for Adelina Patti, the "Ghost" remarked, "I haunt a commercial councillor who does not know one note from another, but who paid 9l. [sic] for a front-row stall to see and hear her in 'Gretchen.'" (January, 1880, 47-48)

Musical productions in London were reviewed by S. Carmichael in a column entitled Our Musical-Box. In it were brief comments on operas, concerts, and music published.

Books and magazine articles were covered in a section marked Our Book-Shelf. These dealt in some way with the drama, music, or the fine arts, and each review was signed or initialed.

The editor himself probably wrote the column entitled Our Omnibus-Box. In it, Scott scorned the use of the "editorial we," and instead often expressed himself in the first person. Our Omnibus-

Box contained brief notations on a variety of subjects, most of them pertaining to the stage, music, or the fine arts. Among other things, the first Our Omnibus-Box reported that Mr. Ruskin had found the impersonation of Shylock at the Lyceum "'noble, tender, and true'"; that "they do not let grass grow under their feet in Glasgow"; that "with the aid of the [Aromatic] Ozonizer the dullest room is filled with perfumes, and the mind wanders to delicious climates." (January, 1880, 63-64) Gone, however, were the gossipy little tidbits so characteristic of the old Echoes from the Green Room and of En Passant, columns which Our Omnibus-Box had replaced.

Not the least interesting portions of the Omnibus-Box were the personal opinions expressed by the fiery editor himself. In his first column Scott vehemently denounced an essay which had appeared in Blackwood's Magazine "on account of the mingled narrowness and absurdity of its views." Commenting on the essay's "personal attack upon favourite actresses," he concluded sweepingly, "Everything indeed in the paper is in the worst taste, and the whole is not less unmanly than offensive." This was merely a preliminary statement, however, for Scott tended to be discursive, not to say immoderate. After censuring the Blackwood's essayist for his "sneer" at newspaper dramatic reviews, Scott then proceeded to take issue with his opponent for his criticism of Sarah Bernhardt and also of Ellen Terry's performance of Portia. "The foolishly-belauded 'Noctes Ambrosianae' contained, probably as much wild wandering talk as could be safely transferred to paper, but 'never aught like this,'" Scott averred. (January, 1880, 62-63)

"To the last bone in their bodies journalists were fighters in the Clement Scott days. Talk about floods of ink--why there were oceans of 'best blue-black' splashed about, they drenched themselves in it," said Mrs. Clement Scott.[10] Indeed her husband did seem to have an overwhelming proclivity for these journalistic ink baths. Writing about Mr. Scott in 1899, Max Beerbohm observed:

> Hot water has been, and still is, his natural element. His life has been a dissolving view of scrimmages, and it is amusing to note how naively unconscious he is that the cause of his troubles lies merely in himself.[11]

It was hardly likely that Scott--passionate, pugnacious, and pertinacious--could avoid making his impetuous personality felt in his magazine. Motivated by a love for acting, and a desire for "wholesome" drama, Scott prided himself upon his honesty; and even those he opposed acknowledged his sincerity, though they often deplored his intemperance of writing. "He is generally in the wrong . . ., but he is never dully in the wrong," declared Beerbohm.[12] And there were enough battles fought within the pages of The Theatre to keep readers entranced. About some of these controversies more will be said later on.

Speaking from the February, 1880, Omnibus-Box, Scott thanked his friends for their "kind appreciation and generous sympathy"--why "sympathy," one wonders--and expressed his appreciation of their

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[10]Margaret Clement Scott, op. cit., p. 23.

[11]Max Beerbohm, Around Theatres (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 46.

[12]Ibid., p. 46.

letters indicating their approval of The Theatre. The editor then went on to articulate his policy for the periodical. The new series had been introduced to the readers without prefatory remarks in order that "the fresh scheme might speak for itself." He promised to exert all energy to "make The Theatre both interesting to the reader, and useful as a record to the theatrical student." He admitted that his idea of "a magazine of popular art and criticism" was not yet brought to perfection, however. He pledged himself to compile "a complete and exhaustive index" every six months, thus providing a compendium of historic events in the theatre. Readers were urged to contribute "notes, memoranda and curious facts" related to the stage. The pictures, regarded as a historical record of the "best" actors and actresses, were to be continued, with the promise of a forthcoming "perfectly novel plan" for their continuance. Apologies were tendered for the poor quality of the present month's photographs--"an unfortunate stress of winter, dark days, and interminable fogs" being the excuses offered. (February, 1880, 125)

In a subsequent paragraph Scott described the practice of listing the complete cast and other data about a performance along with the critique as the return to an old custom of the previous century. ". . . It is pleasant to suggest an idea so simple even to old-fashioned and intolerant people," he added cryptically. (February, 1880, 127)

It is certainly difficult to determine whether Scott ever succeeded in perfecting his plans for a "magazine of popular art and criticism." Unlike Hawkins, he never seemed to arrive at a scheme he could use for any length of time. Columns appeared for a time and

then suddenly disappeared, not to return again. The two most constant elements during Scott's ten years as editor were the columns called Our Play-Box and Our Omnibus-Box. Even in Our Play-Box certain changes were made. Occasionally it did not appear at all. From November, 1882, on, reviews ceased to be signed consistently, and the editor eventually contributed few reviews. In the early days of the Scott regime, the signature "C.S." had appeared frequently at the end of the Play-Box reviews. The May, 1884, Omnibus-Box announced that henceforth recent productions not considered "important enough" to be placed in Our Play-Box would be "briefly mentioned here for future reference." Thus, Our Play-Box came to be an incomplete record and review of London dramatic productions from month to month. However, a new column first appearing in February, 1886, and thereafter a regular monthly feature, did fill some of the gaps left by the revised policy for the Play-Box. This column listed in chronological order the new plays and revivals produced respectively in London, in the provinces, and in Paris. The type of play, the full name of the author, and theatre were other details given.

Moreover, Our Play-Box very occasionally printed reviews which had first been published elsewhere. Hence in November, 1882, the review of Much Ado about Nothing was taken from an unnamed source, with the following notation in brackets:

> I make no apology for republishing this essay--first, because I have some faith in early impressions, notwithstanding what is said to the contrary, and secondly, because it is convenient occasionally to preserve from utter destruction the newspaper criticismsthat have caused much labour and thought.
>
> (November, 1882, 304)

Though the review was unsigned, it was probably Scott's review from The Daily Telegraph. A review by the late Dutton Cook was reprinted in Our Play-Box with Scott's notation that "this essay will have historical interest in the years to come, and I desire to preserve it." (October, 1883, 202-204) A review of Frou-Frou consisted almost wholly of the opinions of the "clever critic of the 'Observer.'" (July, 1881, 44-46)

The column entitled Our Musical-Box ceased to function for a time. When it reappeared in August of 1881, the reviews and comments were signed by William Beatty-Kingston, a prominent journalist. According to The Theatre he was the "only Englishman alive who is a Knight Commander of both the Royal orders of Roumania--the 'Star' and the 'Crown!!" (November, 1884, 263) Beatty-Kingston remained with the magazine until December, 1886, and was succeeded first by "Clavichord" and then by Hermann Klein. For almost a year the column failed to appear, and the music notices became a part of the Omnibus-Box.[13] Then Our Musical-Box resumed, but irregularly, from July, 1889, on. The Musical-Box reviewed the important concerts, grand opera, comic opera, and music published. In addition, there were comments on musicians and musical events. The thoroughness with which all these were covered showed considerable variation, however. Throughout the years of Scott's editorship, the fine arts were given cursory attention, and that irregularly. Our Portfolio, a column reviewing paintings on current exhibition, ran in February and March, 1880. From December,

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[13]From September, 1888, through June, 1889.

1888, through August, 1889, H. L. Collinson reviewed the new art exhibits in A Glance at the Galleries. When these columns were not running, the art notices were included in Our Omnibus-Box, appearing intermittently, however. In view of its subtitle, "A Monthly Review of the Drama, Music, and the Fine Arts," it is reasonable to suggest that with regard to the fine arts, The Theatre did not consistently live up to expectations.

Books, too, were reviewed irregularly. The column, Our Book-Shelf, which had appeared at intervals, had disappeared altogether by October, 1880. Thereafter, books were mentioned in the Omnibus-Box or Musical-Box columns, or if important enough, were discussed in a feature article. Frederick Moy Thomas, for example, reviewed two books in a rather lengthy article on "Recent Theatrical Literature." (January, 1888, 24-31) Readers, then, who wished reviews of all books published on the drama, music, or the arts, had to look elsewhere for this service.

Fiction in The Theatre was regularly featured, and included poetry, much of it composed by the editor; short stories; serials; and pieces written for recitation. The latter were apparently in demand for recitals and other occasions. Clement Scott's "The Midnight Charge" was recited by the actor, Charles Warner, at the Adelphi Theatre "the night before the Grand Review of the Egyptian Troops by Her Majesty in St. James Park." (December, 1882, 350-352) The policy of publishing stories having some connection with the theatre continued to prevail.

The portraits which had been an outstanding attraction from the inception of the monthly, caused the editor some measure of concern.

Scott had previously mentioned that inclement weather had affected the quality of the photographs. He also had complaints from dissatisfied customers. A reader from Sheffield threatened to cancel his subscription unless Scott could give him--according to Scott--"two photographs for a shilling--photographs that cost two shillings apiece in the shops." Scott replied in these words:

> "Well, tastes differ, and our growing subscription list proves that I am right and the Sheffielder is wrong, who may be a very sharp person, but must permit me to know my business better than he does."[14]

Besides the weather and disgruntled readers, Scott had to contend with the allegations of rival theatrical publications, for he found it necessary to assert "for the thousandth time" that the actors and actresses were not paying to have their pictures taken for the magazine. (July, 1886, 56) Moreover, some of the actors and actresses could not or would not comply with requests to sit for portraits. Notably reluctant was Mrs. Kendal, whose note of refusal to sit for her picture was reproduced in Our Omnibus-Box. The editor added that further comment was "useless." (January, 1887, 50) He had apparently overlooked the fact that in the recent past The Theatre had severely reprimanded the actress for making certain statements about the drama which the magazine had considered highly detrimental to the stage. (October, 1884, 165-171; February, 1885, 92-94) While Scott might have forgotten, very possibly Mrs. Kendal had not.

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[14]The Theatre, August, 1880, p. 126. Scott also reported another reader's dissatisfaction with the portraits in the January, 1881, Our Omnibus-Box, p. 58.

To the single Woodbury-type photograph,[15] Scott usually added a full-page pen and ink drawing of a theatre personality, for the subjects of the pictures eventually included dramatists and critics. Both types of "portraits" were accompanied by sketches, usually biographical, with a listing of the parts the person had played. The sketches were often separated, however, from their photographs, in some instances being found in the Omnibus-Box. Often, too, the portraits were not easily identifiable since facsimile signatures of the subjects were used exclusively with the pictures. Handwriting then, as now, was not always legible. The fact that the biographical sketches were separated from the portraits merely added to the inconveniences mentioned. However, beginning in 1887, the names of those sitting for portraits were printed below the photographs.

Moreover, while Mrs. Kendal and others might have been uncooperative, a gratifying number of persons were not. In October, 1886, Scott was able to present with some pride the first group portrait of the cast of a current production, The Road to Ruin at the Vaudeville Theatre. "Here, therefore, our friends and subscribers gain seven pictures instead of two, and have, besides the familiar portraits, an accurate sketch of costume that will be valuable for study, and show how an old comedy was revived, played, and dressed in 1886," he elucidated. (October, 1886, 231-232) Other group portraits appeared thereafter from time to time during Scott's regime.

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[15]These were prints taken directly from the negatives and were of a particularly high quality of finish. They were pasted on the page and were suitable for framing.

It is interesting to note how frequently Scott found it necessary to remind his readers of the historical value of the portraits. In November, 1887, for instance, he re-stated, "It cannot be too widely or emphatically known that this magazine is illustrated with portraits simply and solely because, in after years, these pictures will be valuable in determining the age, its costume, manner, and general deportment." (November, 1887, 284) Apparently, some of the doubters were hard to convince.

Generally speaking, Scott gradually reduced the number of feature articles to the point where there were only three or four per number. These continued to cover a variety of subjects, many of them running in the form of a series. Thus there were series on the foyers of the French theatres in the 1840's by Charles Hervey; on various aspects of the contemporary French theatre by Evelyn Jerrold; on Rossi's interpretation of Shakespeare by William Beatty-Kingston; on "Mr. Henry Irving's Second American Tour" by an unknown writer; on famous English actresses of the past by the Honorable Lewis Wingfield; on old London theatres by W. F. Waller; on "Popular Plays," by Walter Gordon; on "Pittite Memories," by Godfrey Turner; on "The Drury Lane Managers," by Percy Fitzgerald; and on "First Appearances" of noted players, also by Fitzgerald.

Single articles--critical, historical, biographical, exegetical, descriptive--ranged in subject matter from Australasian drama (January, 1887, 246-248) to "Beecher's Histrionic Power." (May, 1887, 246-248) Many articles were on dramatic activities in foreign countries. Among those hitherto unlisted who contributed papers were: Henry Irving; J. T. Grein; Robert W. Lowe; J. Palgrave Simpson; Dover Roberton;

Joseph Knight; Professor Henry Morley; Lady Pollock; Dutton Cook; Walter Herries Pollock; Frederick Hawkins; Genevieve Ward; Gilbert à Beckett; Austin Brereton, the assistant editor of the magazine for some years; Kyrle Bellew; A. W. Pinero; Carl Armbruster; W. S. Gilbert; Herbert Beerbohm Tree; H. Savile Clarke; William Archer; Lewis Carroll; George R. Sims; Walter Goodman; Kate Venning; William Henry Hudson; and H. Schütz Wilson. This list includes historians, players, critics, journalists, authors, and musicians of some repute.

Not all of the articles in the periodical dealt with the theatre, music, or the fine arts. These encompassed such incongruities as lion taming (October, 1889, 193-194); "A Visit to Newgate" (February, 1882, 95-100); and "The Girl Graduate." (November, 1883, 246-250) There were not many such papers, but still it is difficult to see their place in a magazine of such announced specialized interests as The Theatre.

The quality and value of the articles contributed to The Theatre showed considerable variation. Bearing in mind Scott's strong sense of history, one sees that some of the articles to which, presumably, posterity could turn for enlightenment, were published without complete data. An article by Charles Hervey on "The First Night of 'La Dame Aux Camelias [sic]'" failed to give the date of the historic event. (April, 1880, 208-210) A feature article about two volumes written by "Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft," failed to furnish the reader with the title, full names of the authors, and the publisher. (May, 1888, 250-255)

One wonders, too, how much Scott edited some of the contributions. Many of the lengthy papers tended to ramble. A seven-page paper by Brereton purporting to be on "The Drama in New York," began

with a lengthy description of the trip across the Atlantic and the author's transportation difficulties after his arrival in New York. (January, 1884, 24-31) Occasionally, the writers' idiosyncracies of style and organization hindered the clear presentation of their material. The series on "The Old Houses" by W. F. Waller suffered from these shortcomings.[16] Not all of the articles attempting to be scholarly were successfully so. George Tawse in writing of "Charles Kean's 'Winter's Tale'" stated, for example, with reference to the geographical dislocations in the play, that Shakespeare's "universal genius ought to have revealed to him the geographical boundaries of the many countries embraced in his dramas." (February, 1888, 61) Questionable too, is Percy Fitzgerald's comment on Davenant and Killigrew as "somewhat tedious figures, reappearing again and again like the supers in a stage army"--this, in a historical account of the Drury Lane managers. (February, 1887, 79) Lastly, some articles were exceedingly superficial in their analysis and treatment of subject matter. An article on "Playgoers," by Lita Smith (April, 1889, 190-192) and one on "The Girl Graduate" may be cited as horrible examples. Marie Corelli, basing her article upon her observations of one college graduate, had this to say:

> . . . While busied in endeavouring to master logic, the woman-student has lost her great gift of Nature--instinct, and she measures things by rule and plan, not by that wonderfully illogical way of reasoning, "I think so because I think so;" a surmise which,

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[16]The series began with the April, 1881, number and continued through July, 1881.

> absurd as it may seem at first hearing, has proved, in nine cases out of ten, to be correct, so really great are our natural instincts and presentiments, and so truly narrow is our logic.
> (November, 1883, 247)

The great majority of papers printed in The Theatre, on the other hand, were genuinely interesting and valuable. Articles running in the magazine often had immediate interest for its readers, inasmuch as they provided an excellent background for stage productions available in London at that time. Hence,the coming of the Meiningen players was heralded by two articles in the June, 1881, number. Readers were given two papers on Wagnerian opera by Carl Armbruster, in preparation for the approaching operatic season at Drury Lane. (April, 1882, 193-201; May, 1882, 273-280) A forthcoming Lyceum production of Macbeth provided the stimulus for an article in the December, 1888, number. However, a perceptible number of articles in The Theatre concerned themselves with the theatre of the past, rather than the contemporary stage. One wonders whether Scott's readers were as much interested in the past as their editor evidently was.

The Theatre can also be commended for running articles supporting different sides of controversial issues. Scott made his opinions known, to be sure, but others who felt differently were also asked to contribute their ideas. This is one of the most valuable assets of the magazine extending throughout its lifetime. A case in point is found in the July, 1889, number, in which there were two reviews--one sympathetic, the other unsympathetic--of Ibsen's A Doll's House. Some of the controversies will be taken up in a later chapter.

Another innovation of Scott's deserves brief mention. Under his editorship there were more illustrations. These included pen and ink sketches of scenes and characters from current productions, and pictures of theatres and important theatre people. In January, 1881, for instance, there appeared a two-page spread of pen and ink drawings, showing scenes from the Drury Lane pantomime. The January, 1882, number devoted a full page to pen and ink drawings of "Our London Managers." Drawings such as these provide the present-day student with valuable historical data. The student of costuming would also find these drawings most illuminating. The artists' names were not disclosed. In this respect, Scott's expectations for his magazine's usefulness to posterity seem to have found fulfillment. However, the number of such illustrations varied from year to year. Some years were devoid of illustrative material other than the Woodbury-type photographs.

That Scott's career as editor of The Theatre was turbulent can be clearly seen from a study of his messages to his readers. These appear either in Our Omnibus-Box or as feature articles. The readers were repeatedly requested to support The Theatre.

> Friends seem to think that the magazine is published for gratuitous distribution, and if everyone interested in the stage does not get a copy free, gratis, and for nothing, the editor is a stingy, old hunks. . . . Now, as everyone knows, you can get a copy of The Theatre for a shilling.
>
> (July, 1880, 60)

In November, 1880, the editor found himself accused of plagiarism. He declared, however, that it had been a "pure accident"; that indeed his intentions had been entirely innocent; that he was aggrieved that his accuser had not extended him "the courtesy of a preliminary

explanation and mutual interchange of civilities." Under these circumstances he found it unnecessary to apologize to his accuser, although he "willingly" apologized to the other parties involved. (November, 1880, 312-314) No apologies were tendered to the readers, however. One wonders whether they would have heard about the incident at all if the gentlemanly amenities had been observed.

The lead article in December, 1880, consisted of a message from Scott. The readers were informed that their editor had made "improvements in style and design," such as were compatible with "commercial considerations." With satisfaction Scott observed that his scheme for the reviewing of plays, including the illustrations and the critics' signatures, had been widely copied by the newspapers. All were again reminded of the valuable record they were accumulating in their copies of the magazine, and were exhorted to recruit the support of their friends. Referring metaphorically to The Theatre as "this little ship," and to himself as the commander, Scott summarized as follows:

> The journey has no doubt been rough, but the luck seems turning, and we sail back to port at Christmas-time none the worse for our struggle with wind and waves, and quite prepared for a new expedition next year, outward bound.
>
> (December, 1880, 319)

Cheered by the fan letter written by an enthusiastic Irishman which was duly reprinted in Our Omnibus-Box (February, 1881, 119-120), and by other tokens of appreciation, Scott was able to make his next report to his followers in a more hopeful frame of mind. "The winning post is not yet reached, but we are close upon it, and with another vigourous spurt I myself don't despair of victory." (July, 1881, 50)

Yet, later that same year, Scott became involved in litigation. Scott's reasons were given as follows: "Because I dared to possess The Theatre magazine, because I had the effrontery to do something in a humble way for dramatic art, because I resisted the idea that there is a monopoly in dramatic literature." Further, he asserted that he was particularly pained that an attempt had been made to blacken the reputation of The Theatre. Without stating the real cause of the litigation, Scott reported that he had gained justice for himself. After thanking friends and subscribers for their expressions of trust and confidence, he promised to discuss "future prospects of our Magazine [sic]" in the next month. (December, 1881, 379-380)

However, in the next number, the editor failed to keep his promise because he had to "await 'time and the hour!'" (January, 1882, 64) In April, 1882, Our Omnibus-Box reported that the case of Scott vs. Sampson had succeeded in establishing an important principle in the conduct of libel cases. Again, the details of the case were not disclosed. (May, 1882, 316)

In May, 1882--Scott was having a bad year of it--the editor was forced to defend a poem, "The Midshipmite," which had first been published in the magazine. An evening paper had censured the poem on grounds of its poor taste and bad poetical style. Scott's reaction was characteristic; he retaliated by quoting an excerpt from a poem which had appeared in that paper, appending to this some bristling comments on its poetical style. (May, 1882, 316)

Those who were interested in the final outcome of the case of Scott vs. Sampson were at last rewarded. Sampson had retracted his statements and had paid 1500 pounds in damages, which sum Scott

announced would be used in the interests of the magazine "that after a three years' struggle with winds and waves has fairly weathered the storm." Accordingly, a new series would start in the ensuing year; and the Sheffielder had won out, for two photographs were promised. Thus, a "fresh career of usefulness, interest, and prosperity" was the sanguine outlook for The Theatre. (December, 1882, 321-323) In conclusion Scott again solicited the support of the readers, who must have responded loyally, since the editor thanked them for their "all but unanimous praise" two months later. (February, 1883, 118)

Notwithstanding, the next message to the readers confided that "a few weeks ago the vessel. . . . was as near capsized as could possibly be; but the captain stuck to his post and the officers stuck to the captain with such loyalty and endeavour that once more we find ourselves merrily sailing on an open sea." The cause of the near-disaster--apparently publication difficulties--had been removed. Scott promised to be more "business-like" in the future, but with no compromise of "tactics or . . . principles." "I cannot believe that The Theatre is at all less necessary now than it was five years ago," he told his readers. Scott reaffirmed a long-standing policy of not purveying "scandal, gossip, and tittle-tattle" in The Theatre. The readers, he declared, "want the drama treated as its sister arts, music and painting, are treated, with seriousness and sympathy." (July, 1885, 47-48)

In March, 1886, readers received Scott's reassurance that he was not planning to leave the field of letters "for the elocutionary platform." He had no intention, he stated, of competing with "such professional reciters as Mr. Wilson Barrett and Mr. William Terriss."

(March, 1886, 170-171)

A year later--1887--Scott felt constrained to reply to "several correspondents," who had inquired as to why Scott had not chosen to reply to a "series of insults that have continued, with but slight and spasmodic interruptions, since the year 1880." Despite his lofty explanation that he crossed swords only with "worthy opponents," he could not resist pointing out that his unnamed attacker had been so ungrateful as to attack "an old friend--to whom he stands indebted for journalistic assistance." He added in conclusion, "The readers of this magazine know pretty well by this time how powerless are such miserable little pin-pricks against one who is absolutely indifferent to the tactics of his pertinacious aggressor." (April, 1887, 232)

A month later there were indications that Scott was not so insensitive to those "little pin-pricks" as he had claimed. He stated in Our Omnibus-Box that his "long service in the interests of the stage, stands on record. . . . But as regards my pitifully agressive [sic] antagonist I fail to remember one circumstance in his career that would justify his assuming the character of censor as to what is honourable in a writer and loyal in a man." (May, 1887, 284-285) One wonders how the doughty editor would have treated a "worthy" antagonist.

In December, 1889, after ten years at the helm, Scott sadly announced that he was stepping down from the command of "the old vessel." He reiterated that he had not gained financially from his association with The Theatre, but instead had incurred "serious financial loss." Moreover, he had discovered--he said--that his position "as a public writer" had been a hindrance to the magazine's "commercial prosperity." Therefore, he was turning over his work to those

who were in a better position to make a commercial and literary success of the magazine. He made his own feelings clear in the following fashion:

> The only disappointments, the only disasters, the only misrepresentations, the only lost friendships connected with a stormy life, have been in some way or other connected with the [sic] The Theatre magazine, which was taken up with energy in 1880, and is now left with good-will, but a passing sadness, in 1890.
>
> (December, 1889, 335)

In the ten years just completed, The Theatre had reflected the personality of its tempestuous editor. Whether this was advantageous to the fortunes of The Theatre constitutes a moot question. As he had stated when he first assumed the command of his "ship," Scott's two-fold aim was to make the magazine interesting to its readers and to provide a historical record of its time. If, in some few respects, he failed, yet one can say that to a large extent Scott did fulfill his self-imposed goals. Certainly, it might fairly be said that Scott was ever animated by the zeal to serve the best interests of the drama as he saw them. During his regime, The Theatre had strongly supported a Dramatic Academy.[17] It had lent encouragement to amateur productions.[18] It had campaigned for better fire protection and other safety measures for the London theatres.[19] The magazine had strongly upheld the

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[17]The Theatre, June, 1881, p. 379; also June, 1882, pp. 365-368; October, 1882, pp. 193-199; November, 1882, pp. 309-310.

[18]The Theatre, February, 1882, pp. 113-116; also March, 1883, pp. 174-181; May, 1883, pp. 307-309; September, 1883, pp. 131-134; April, 1881, pp. 244-245; May, 1881, pp. 305-309. Reviews of amateur performances appeared frequently.

[19]The Theatre, March, 1882, pp. 186-188; October, 1883, pp. 210-211; February, 1882, p. 119; October, 1881, pp. 244-245.

privilege of Mrs. Langtry to make the stage her career, on the principle that the stage was open to all, even those who didn't need the money.[20] The Theatre had advocated Parliamentary reform of the laws governing amusement places.[21] It had opposed the indiscriminate taking of curtain calls by performers on grounds that this practice destroyed dramatic illusion.[22] It had supported the prerogatives claimed by those sitting in the pit to give responsible criticism.[23] It had denounced the growing popularity of theatrical gossip columnists.[24] It had opposed smoking in the theatre.[25] About some of these more will be said in a later chapter.

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[20]The Theatre, February, 1882, pp. 113-116; June, 1882, p. 380; October, 1882, pp. 233-234 and pp. 251-252; November, 1882, pp. 311-314.

[21]The Theatre, March, 1882, pp. 187-188; October, 1882, pp. 257-262; March, 1883, pp. 182-183; June, 1883, pp. 375-376; September, 1883, pp. 154-157; February, 1884, pp. 102-103; April, 1884, pp. 198-200.

[22]See The Theatre, March, 1884, p. 161, for a typical statement.

[23]The Theatre, March, 1880, pp. 129-142; December, 1882, pp. 366-367; January, 1883, pp. 49-52; August, 1884, pp. 91-93.

[24]The Theatre, August, 1881, pp. 115-117; February, 1884, pp. 63-64; May, 1885, pp. 257-258; June, 1885, p. 306; July, 1885, p. 48.

[25]The Theatre, October, 1881, p. 256; November, 1881, pp. 313-314; February, 1884, pp. 102-103.

Capes and Eglington Take Over: January, 1890-June, 1893

The three and a half years in which Bernard E. J. Capes and Charles Eglington served as editors of The Theatre will be treated as a unit, even though the two men were co-editors from July, 1890, through June, 1892, only. Capes was sole editor during the first six months of the year 1890, and Eglington carried on alone from July, 1892, through June, 1893. However, despite changes in the editorship, there were few startling differences in the arrangement and form of The Theatre. Indeed, the subscribers must have found it easy to adjust to the new regime, for Capes, and later Eglington, adhered largely to Scott's scheme for the magazine as of 1889. The columns Our Play-Box, Our-Musical Box, and Our Omnibus-Box were continued with little change in form and content. Appended to the Omnibus-Box was the familiar list of plays and revivals produced in London, in the Provinces, and in Paris. A column called Our Amateurs' Play-Box, giving reviews of amateur productions, which had started in December, 1889, was maintained by the new editors. The growing importance of these performances can be readily seen in the number of pages devoted to them.

Two of the popular Woodbury-type photographs were included in each number, and brief biographical sketches of the subjects were to be found either in Our Omnibus-Box or--at times--in a separate section entitled Our Portraits. Eventually, other illustrative material was added to the portraits: pen and ink drawings; reproductions of illustrations taken from books reviewed; reproductions of paintings reviewed. These were a decided asset to The Theatre.

Short stories, serials, poetry, and feature articles appeared as in previous years. The feature articles continued to be of a critical, exegetical, descriptive, biographical, or historical nature. Again, some were run as a series. On the whole the quality of these articles was scholarly and thoughtful, although there were a few exceptions. Goodrich's article on "The Dramatic Censorship" (May, 1892, 232-237) and Hayman's on dancing (May, 1891, 237-241) may be cited as examples of the latter.

Writers who contributed papers to the magazine included some new as well as some familiar names: W. Davenport Adams; Austin Brereton; R. Farquharson Sharp; William Henry Hudson; S. J. Adair Fitzgerald; Magdalen Brooke; Jerome K. Jerome; Harry Plowman; Walter Calvert; Evelyn Ballantyne; G. W. Dancy; Clement Scott; E. Spence; John Coleman; Arthur Wood; A. W. Bean; Oliver Bluff; Addison Bright; A. J. Daniels; W. A. Bettany Lewis; Charles T. J. Hiatt; and Cecil Howard.

One new feature instituted by Capes and which was carried on for some years, was the practice of assembling in the January issue a potpourri of contributions by actors, actresses, and other prominent performers. Thus, in the January, 1890, number were collected the creative efforts of Fred Leslie, Annie Hughes, F. Bernard-Beere, Genie (Rose) Norreys, and J. L. Shine, all well known stage personalities.

Also new was a commentary on the stage written in the form of a letter to Terence, the ancient playwright, and signed by the "Call Boy." In his first letter, dated January, 1890, the "Call Boy" took the opportunity to criticize the "'Ibsen Cult.!" Eventually, the monthly letter to Terence was relegated to Our Omnibus-Box, where it

remained until it was discontinued in July, 1890.

By February, 1891--Capes and Eglington were then joint editors--Our Musical-Box had been superseded by Musical Notes. A column dealing with the fine arts, Our Art Gallery, and another on books related to the theatre, called Reviews, were both added in February, 1891. Our Art Gallery alternated with a column called Art Notes. The columns on books and the arts did not appear every month, however.

When Charles Eglington became the sole editor, he changed the name of Our Play-Box to Plays of the Month, and rechristened Our Omnibus-Box to Notes of the Month. In form and content these columns remained their old selves despite their new titles. Beginning with the August, 1892, issue, however, the less important productions were reviewed without listing the complete cast and other data.

One important trend in the feature articles began in 1892, a year which began with Capes and Eglington in joint editorship and ended with the latter in sole control. The papers in this year tended to be more critical; and the contemporary theatre in all of its phases--actors, managers, critics, dramatists, and the drama--were frankly and seriously assessed. Thus in February of that year appeared "a critical appreciation" of Herbert Beerbohm Tree as actor-manager, an article in which praise and blame were meted out as they seemed to be warranted. (February, 1892, 69-76) Addison Bright wrote a critique of George Alexander, an actor-manager, in the same highly critical vein. Of Alexander's acting he said:

> In brief, although in his acting there is always a suggestion of romance, even in the wretched "walking gentleman parts" to which of late he has condemned himself, Mr. Alexander can only compass romance of

> a certain kind, the tender, the sweet, the elegant, the refined, the delicate, and the plaintive. (May, 1892, 240)

An article on critics appeared in the June number. (June, 1892, 277-283) In September appeared "a comparative estimate" of "Four 'Leading Men,'" also decidedly candid in its approach. (September, 1892, 109-114) These articles are exceedingly valuable, for they indicate the quality of Victorian criticism and give a more candid picture of the theatre of that time than has been seen hitherto.

Equally noticeable is the absence of articles dealing with personal reminiscences of the theatre and of dramatic performances. These excursions into the past had been conspicuously featured during the days of Scott.

When Eglington became the sole editor of the magazine, he made a few noteworthy changes. In May, 1893, The Theatre began a series of interviews of stage personalities at home. In content and style, these may be likened to the present-day stories of actors and actresses "at home" to be found in stage and movie periodicals.

The magazine presented another "first" in that same month. This consisted of a complete script of a one-act play, In the Season, by Langdon E. Mitchell. This was a play which had actually been produced at a matinee performance.

In the same month was begun a series called "Condensed Dramas," consisting of a parody of a different current production each month.

The following month the first of a series of open letters signed "The Candid Friend," made its debut. The first letter was addressed to "Oscar Wilde, Esquire," and in it the playwright was sharply taken to

task on a number of counts. Among other things, Wilde's "Candid Friend" advised him thus: "Face, instead of evading, the difficulties of dramatic art, take its practice seriously, respect yourself and your audience, and you have in you the capacity to do good--it may be great--work." (June, 1893, 325)

To summarize, under Capes and Eglington, working either separately or jointly, The Theatre took on a more dignified tone. Though the editors expressed their own opinions, as Scott had done, in Our Omnibus-Box (later Notes of the Month), they did not adopt Scott's colorful and picturesque manner of doing so. Nor did they use their magazine as a vehicle for the waging of personal battles and journalistic feuds. Moreover, they did not take their readers into their confidence. Gone, therefore, were the piteous pleas to the subscribers to support the magazine. Gone, too, were the cosily confidential reports on the progress of The Theatre from the "captain."

The Last Years under Bright and Eglington: July, 1893 through December, 1897

Addison Bright became the editor of The Theatre in July, 1893, and held that position for a year. Bright was identified by W. A. Lewis Bettany as one of the prominent members of the group known as the "New Critics." Bettany listed their distinguishing characteristics as: comparative youth; being "somewhat given to Self-advertisement"; and a tendency to write in the first person. Moreover, according to Bettany, "they all consider themselves men of more culture than Mr. Scott, and better critics of plays than the older men." Describing Bright as "one of the most earnest" of the "New Critics" and also the "best judge of

acting" of them all, Bettany went on to say:

> Mr. Bright has an extensive acquaintance with modern literature, an ardent admiration for Ibsen, and is one of the few lucky men who have discovered literature in Mr. Jones and Mr. Pinero.
> (June, 1892, 281)

Bright was also the first president of the Playgoers' Club, the history and activities of which were described in the November, 1893, issue of The Theatre. (November, 1893, 273-281)

The transition from Eglington's editorship to that of Bright, was effected smoothly inasmuch as Bright followed Eglington's plan for the magazine. The various innovations of 1892-1893 described above were retained by Bright. The open letters, the critical articles, the interviews, the "Condensed Dramas," and the usual columns were all retained. Editorial comments emanated from their customary source, Notes of the Month. Like his immediate predecessors, the new editor did not take his readers into his confidence, and he too made his comments outspoken, but avoided the lack of restraint which had made Scott's so antagonistic and ungracious in spirit.

Among those who contributed articles during Bright's regime were some new to The Theatre, namely William Alison; G. E. Morrison; R. Jope Slade; Lorin A. Lathrop; Percival H. W. Almy; Alphonse Daudet; and Philip Houghton.

The innovations instituted by the new editor are noteworthy. First, he raised the level of the fiction to a certain extent. Beginning in 1894, The Theatre ran translations of French short stories written respectively by Guy de Maupassant, François Coppée, and Alphonse Daudet. Moreover, by discontinuing the practice of soliciting contri-

butions from members of the acting profession for the January number, he helped elevate the quality of the fiction in a negative way.

Bright's other innovation comprised an ambitious series of articles entitled, "The Theatrical Revolution: An Account of the Reformation of the English Stage in the Twentieth Century," written by "Perseus." In this series the writer is supposedly speaking in 1923, when a theatrical millennium has arrived. He gives a Utopian picture of the theatre in all of its phases, contrasting it with the theatre of the late nineteenth century.[26] The reader of today is thus able to see Perseus' critique of the late nineteenth-century theatre.

Bright's editorship apparently ended with the June, 1894, number, for on the last page of the July, 1894, number was a request that all manuscripts be sent directly to Mr. Eglington, the editor. This is the only indication that an editorial change took place, for Eglington's name did not appear in the masthead. Indeed the name of the editor was never disclosed throughout succeeding years, although presumably Eglington carried on as editor during the three and a half years of the magazine's lifetime.

With Eglington in charge, reviews in the Plays of the Month section were once more signed, and beginning with the September, 1894, number, he completely reorganized the magazine.[27] In doing so, he

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[26]The series began with the October, 1893, issue and ran through the July, 1894, issue.

[27]An advertisement in 1894 carried the notation that "The Theatre has been under a new editorship since the number for September, 1894, inclusive." This could mean that it took Eglington a month or two to reorganize editorial policy, or it could mean that a new man took office. In view of the fact that research has not revealed the name of any later editor, this paper is proceeding on the assumption that Eglington continued his editorship until the end of the magazine.

reinserted certain features which had been prominent in The Theatre during the Hawkins era. Familiar columns like The Watch-Tower and The Round Table--unmodified in content, form, and style--were reinstated to their old positions. The two September Watch-Tower articles of 1894 dealt with "Our Stage Today" and with "The Past Opera Season." Both were unsigned, but very likely they were reflections of the editor's opinions. The Round Table, as formerly, comprised contributions on a variety of theatrical subjects by such old friends as Clement Scott, W. Davenport Adams, Percy Fitzgerald, and Arthur W. à Beckett. Feuilleton, which also dated back to Hawkins' time, again made its entrance. By coincidence, this first Feuilleton was an article on Voltaire written by Hawkins himself. Readers must have felt that truly the "good old days" of The Theatre had returned. Moreover, to further intensify any feelings of nostalgia which may have been aroused, two other "old" columns were revived: At the Play, replete with sub-sections such as In London, In Paris, and In Spain, was restored together with Echoes from the Green Room. The latter gave the readers news items about the theatre from all over the world and also spoke editorially when the need arose.

The two photographs per month and the column giving reviews of amateur performances were retained without change. The biographies, however, were once again placed next to the appropriate photographs, a most welcome rearrangement.

In 1895, the reviews of amateur performances and the Feuilleton section were discontinued permanently. With these deletions, the editor retained the revised arrangement of the magazine until its demise in December, 1897. The attempt to return to the scheme of the

Hawkins period was underscored by the return in the subtitle from "A Monthly Review of the Drama, Music, and the Fine Arts," to the original "A Monthly Review and Magazine."

This chapter has attempted to give a kaleidoscopic picture of The Theatre during its career as a monthly magazine. During the nearly twenty years of its existence the periodical saw certain variations in content and form, but its primary focus was consistently on the stage in all of its aspects. Differences in the salient features of the magazine were usually made in accord with changes in the editorship, of which there were at least seven.

CHAPTER II

FOUR MAJOR THEMES RELATED TO THE THEATRE

This chapter will be devoted to certain major topics which consistently engaged the interest and attention of the writers of The Theatre magazine. Four subjects have been selected as "major" themes either because of the frequency of their occurrence or because of their great importance. Each of the four will be treated in a separate section. These are: four facets of the late Victorian audience; the merits of a proposed National Theatre; the worth of a proposed Dramatic Academy; and two questions concerning playwriting of the era as covered by The Theatre. At the conclusion of the chapter three subordinate themes also related to the theatre will be dealt with very briefly. This analysis, it is hoped, will provide a clearer picture of the important issues confronting the late Victorian theatre.

The Audience

Throughout its lifetime the pages of The Theatre abound in articles dealing with the audience. Careful study of these contributions reveals, however, that interest in the audience centered about four aspects of the subject: descriptions of various audiences; the problems posed by the pit; the matter of orders, or complimentary tickets; and audience etiquette.

Descriptions of various audiences. A most unflattering picture of the audience of 1878 was painted by Frederic C. Broughton. According to him, the playgoers of that time went to the theatre, not to see the play, but "because it is the fashion, or because they are bored." Moreover, Broughton accused the playgoers of asking too much of the performers, of being "indiscriminating" in their likes and dislikes. "To please the playgoer an artist should be the godchild of all the fairies, and not one of them must have failed to attend his christening ceremony."

Even more serious is Broughton's indictment of the theatregoer as the destroyer of dramatic art. They may revere Shakespeare "as if he were really the representative of English honour, English intellect, patriotism, art, and even religion itself," but they scorn the drama itself.

Besides all these, the audiences of 1878 were described scathingly as being "servile." They were prone to lend their support and patronage to that performer or that type of drama which was thought to be fashionable at a given time.

> Modern audiences are as so many sheep. They wait until some one shall precede them through a gap in the theatrical hedge, and then they follow blindly. When Mrs. Bancroft, . . . elected to play comedy, . . . they admired her at once, and why? Simply because it was the fashion.
> (August, 1878, 37)

Perhaps one answer to the charges made by Broughton is to be found in the Watch-Tower for the following month. The Watch-Tower pointed out that the "back-bone of the educated and taste-possessing people for whose return to the play-house we have so long been hoping against hope," was being priced out of the theatre. According to the

Watch-Tower, conditions in the cheaper sections of the playhouses were such that persons of this class would prefer to stay away from the theatre, rather than endure them.

> We may be told that our fathers and grandfathers used to have no objection to the shilling or half-crown pit, and that people who cannot afford to pick and choose must not be squeamish. But is it squeamish for a refined woman to object to the hustling necessary to get a fair seat in the pit, to dislike having baskets of "lemonade and stout" thrust under her notice, and feel doubtful about her companions who sit so very close to her, who suck oranges and crack nuts and indulge in various habits not recognised in polite society? Is it squeamish for the husband of this lady to feel even more acutely than she, that the whole thing is out of the question?
>
> (September, 1878, 101)

A description of an imaginary first night audience written by John Austen is to be found in the July, 1879, number. Austen starts off with a comment that attending premieres is now the fashion "in certain circles." After pointing out that a goodly number of those sitting in the stalls and boxes have a personal interest in the success of the play, Austen adds that others likely to be present at such gatherings are critics, novelists, playwrights, actresses, and rival managers. He makes one significant statement that corroborates some of Broughton's.

> But we cannot help giving a moment's thought to the perpetual puzzle presented by the fondness of some of those around us for attendance at <u>premières</u>. They have not two ideas about the prospects of the piece; they have no discoverable interest in the stage and its surroundings.
>
> (July, 1879, 371)

It is interesting that Austen does not concern himself with those sitting in the less expensive parts of the house, those whom Bronson Howard described glowingly as "the exuberant, restless, explosive, irrepressible

mass of humanity." (August, 1879, 26)

A rather superficial attempt to describe the audience is represented in the efforts of Lita Smith. Miss Smith divided the "great mass of London playgoers" into three groups. In the first she placed "those who love the theatre for art's sake, who appreciate the talents of actors and actresses"; in the second, she put those "who have not intellect enough to appreciate a good play, taste enough to value clever acting, or sufficient discernment to separate the wheat from the chaff; whose knowledge of the drama and its exponents is gathered from one of the many weekly penny papers"; in the third group, she placed those people "to whom a theatre is an enchanted palace, and the play an absorbing incident in real life." Miss Smith then proceeded to ask herself a loaded question--does the first group of playgoers, or the third "enjoy" the drama most--and answered in favor of the latter. A question or two might properly be asked of Miss Smith. What did she mean by "enjoy"? How could she know who was "enjoying" the play and who was not?

It was observed earlier that Austen's article said nothing of those who sit in the cheaper sections of the theatre--the denizens of the pit and the gallery. Max Pemberton, in August, 1892, gives all of his attention to those who sit in the gallery, known as the "gods." Pemberton tells us that in order to sit with "the gods" one must mount "many steps."

> You may have a man of war upon your right hand, who sucks his cane and drinks small beer to while away the half-hour that intervenes before the rising of the curtain; and if you have not a baby, a well spring of noise if not of pleasure, upon your left, you will be a lucky man. A hundred youths who illustrate the line that "care keeps his watch in every old man's eye," a sailor or two, a

> woman who has partaken freely of the flowing bowl, a bard who knows half a line of the latest chorus from the Gaiety, and a bevy of shabby-genteel people, make up the little company; and chattering, laughing, shouting, whistling, drinking, they await the drama. (August, 1892, 74)

As for the dramatic tastes of the "gods," the writer says that they like virtue and despise villany, even though "many are no doubt greater sinners than the . . . villains they hiss so heartily." They like humor and, says Pemberton with an unconscious note of patronage, they have an "appreciation for fine lines that would hardly be looked for in the gallery."

The moral which Pemberton draws from his visit to the gallery, is that authors should not beglect their responsibilities, for in arousing the better side of these drab people, they are "doing as great a work as may be accomplished from the pulpit itself."

At least one of the gallery-ites demonstrated that he was quite capable of defending the "gods." "C.D." asserted in 1894 that the pit and the gallery don't have the same kind of audience. While the pit has a lot of people who go to the theatre because they think they ought to, the gallery houses the true lovers of the play. These people have more refined tastes than managers frequently give them credit for, but this element doesn't make its approval or disapproval known to the managers. Significantly, the writer entitled his article, "The Maligned Gods." (July, 1894, 8-13)

If we may believe Arthur a Beckett, the first night audience at the Lyceum in 1895 was as glittering and distinguished as that described by Austen in 1879. Everybody who was anybody was there, from the Duke and Duchess of York to Mr. Joseph Knight, Editor of Notes and

Queries. Concluded à Beckett,

> A first night at the Lyceum is, as I have suggested, doubly interesting. Not only is the performance the outcome of genius, but the audience is simply marvellous. Both are created by the same wonder-worker--Henry Irving.
>
> (February, 1895, 73)

The Watch-Tower of May, 1896, gave readers of The Theatre an actor's view on audiences. The first night audience was thought by Herbert Waring to be "'far keener and more analytical'" than the average audience, described as "'an unthinking and eminently gregarious animal, wanting in analysis.'" The Watch-Tower thought Waring overly cynical in his estimation, and pointed out the inconsistency of the actor's statements. Waring had given the audience credit for "'common sense'" and the ability to teach the actor how to play his role. Watch-Tower concluded with a warning that players should not underestimate the intellectual capacities of their audiences.

Possibilities that the intellectual level of London audiences might be raised looked promising in March, 1897. Ernest Kuhe reported that Herbert Beerbohm Tree, a leading actor-manager, was planning to sell medium-priced seats in the new theatre he was building. Thus, at last, the interests of "the man of culture, of refinement, and of taste in all that concerns art, who is devoted to the drama, but utterly unable to do things en prince, and wholly averse to going to the other extreme," were about to be served. If one may judge from articles in The Theatre, it was about time for him to have his day. (March, 1897, 155-159)

An attempt to analyze the growing theatrical audiences of 1897 was made by W. Davenport Adams in the April number. Adams observed that

new "multitudes" were flocking to the theatres to see pieces of the type of The Gaiety Girl, The Prisoner of Zenda, and The Sign of the Cross, but that they were studiously avoiding "the drama dealing seriously with the life of today." According to Adams, "the Gaiety Girl genre exists mainly for the aristocracy and the Stock exchange" and all those seeking "amusement," while plays based upon popular novels like The Prisoner of Zenda appealed mainly to the middle-class. "The youngsters who delight above all in pictures develop into adults for whom the pictorial representation of a favourite fiction is a joy forever," explained the writer. As for the Sign of the Cross, this type appealed to those who liked a "mingling on the stage of sentiment and religion, set forth in pseudo-Biblical style."

Some playwrights like Sydney Grundy thought that this new body of playgoers could be taught to appreciate the better type of drama, but another playwright, Henry Arthur Jones, was quoted as saying that he had no faith in "educating" theatregoers. In Adams' own opinion, "as the 'serious' playgoer multiplies, so will the easy-going; nay, the ratio in the latter case will probably be much greater than in the former." (April, 1897, 198-202)

An article appearing in November of the same year took note of the sudden slump in attendance observed in the London theatres. A critic, J. F. Nisbet, attributed this unexpected decline to the competition offered by the fast growing suburban theatre movement.[1] Nisbet thought that the London managers like Irving, Tree, and Alexander were

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[1]For other articles on the rise of the suburban theatre see The Theatre, Nov., 1895, pp. 273-277; April, 1897, pp. 202-205; Oct., 1897, pp. 155-157; Dec., 1897, pp. 302-306.

themselves contributing to the popularity of the suburban houses by booking touring dates at these theatres "with the best attractions of their season." The result would be that the suburbanite would feel that he need only wait to have the best London productions "brought to his door" and offered at a rate reduction to boot. The writer ventured to predict that as a consequence of this multiplicity of playhouses, there might be a return to the "system of short runs, cheap mounting, and, perhaps, moderate salaries." However, he felt that such changes would not necessarily be "disastrous" to the stage. Nevertheless, he thought it would be well to be ready for them. To that end, Nisbet concluded by suggesting that the London theatres try to find out from what areas they drew their audiences. "Inferentially," declared Nisbet, "the influence of the suburbs on west-end theatrical business is enormous." (November, 1897, 226-229)

Thus we see that the composition of London audiences had changed from the first days of The Theatre. On the one hand a larger--and probably less select--audience had been attracted to the London theatres. On the other, the competition of the suburban theatre threatened to remove some of this number. If one may judge from the papers devoted to the subject, the first night audience was consistently of special and atypical composition.

Problems posed by the pit. The Watch-Tower of September, 1878, has already painted an unattractive picture of the pit, one of the cheaper sections of the London playhouses. But the pit had its supporters also. Tradition had it that here sat the true playgoers, "those who come solely to enjoy the entertainment, and therefore devote their whole

attention to what is being done or said on the stage." By tradition also, these pittites, as they were called, were regarded as the truly critical element of the audience. "May it not, without exaggeration, be granted that the pit audience is at once the most attentive, most discriminative, most truly critical, and most constant of any part of the house?," asked Clement Scott rhetorically in 1874.[2] And Max Beerbohm describes his first visit to the pit with this introduction:

> The Pit! There was a certain traditional magic in the sound. There was some secret of joy that I had often wished to elucidate. "I enclose my card, and am, Sir, your obedient servant, AN OLD PITTITE." How often in the newspapers had I read letters with this conclusion! And such letters--so oracular, permeated with so notable a pride! It had often been borne in on me that there must be in the pit something--some mystic grace--that enables a man to judge more surely, to take himself more seriously, and to spend a happier evening than elsewhere.[3]

The subject of the pit and its rights and privileges first came to the attention of The Theatre readers when a certain manager, Bancroft, reconstructed the Haymarket Theatre. In doing so, he abolished the cheap seats on the ground floor, called the pit, and installed in their stead some higher priced and more luxurious accommodations, known as the stalls. The former inhabitants of the pit were then seated in a section called the second circle, which Clement Scott, a pit sympathizer, declared to be a "gallery, and nothing else."

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[2]The Theatre, March, 1880, p. 137. A part of this 1874 paper was reprinted in the issue mentioned above.

[3]Max Beerbohm, Around Theatres (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 426.

Opening night festivities at the new Haymarket Theatre on January 31, 1880, were marred by ominous murmurings and other expressions of disapproval from the second circle. When the curtain went up, the protests became even more discordant. Consequently, according to Moy Thomas, a critic whose eye-witness account of the event was reprinted in Our Play-Box, Mr. Bancroft had to appeal to his unruly audience. His speech was interrupted by sundry queries and jeers from the disgruntled pittites. Bancroft was quoted as explaining to the unhappy patrons that there was no pit because he couldn't "afford" it, and "a theatre, gentlemen, is after all a place of business." Other sections of the house were sympathetic to the management, and gradually the "tumult" died down. When Bancroft returned to the stage in his role of Blount, he was cheered enthusiastically, Thomas tells us.

This was the incident which sparked the symposium discussion in the March, 1880, number of The Theatre, the topic being phrased as follows: "Is the Pit an Institution or an Excrescence?" Mr. Bancroft's opinion has already been described above. He was firmly defended and supported by John Hollingshead, a fellow manager, who pointed out that the pittites had enjoyed the best seats in the house "for fifty years at a too moderate price," and now the turn of "their wretched superiors" had come. The theatrical manager, "the most heavily taxed, rated, and rented tradesman in the world," had a duty to himself and to his creditors, said Hollingshead. Besides, he added, this was "only an experiment on the part of one manager out of fifty."

The playwright, H. J. Byron, felt that the removal of the pit would prove to be a mistake. He thought that the actors would miss the quick responsiveness of the pittites, since those sitting in the stalls

were not prone to express their feelings very energetically. "That the absence of a pit is depressing to an actor, no artist who has had the opportunity of practically judging of the fact can deny," he stated. On the other hand, Byron did not sympathize with the uproar raised on the opening night. He pointed out that the malcontents had been provided "with comfortable places in a portion of the house always more expensive than the pit," and that in other houses the managers had been pushing them back "under a low stuffy roof" in order to give more space to the stalls. Moreover, Byron upheld the rights of the theatrical manager to do whatever he wished with his own property.

The pit found little support from the critic Ernest A. Bendall who questioned the traditional and time-honored critical capacities of the present-day pit.

> If Hazlitt and Charles Lamb were going to the play now, they would, I am convinced, not be found in the pit; and although here and there playgoers of taste, of culture, of judgment, of what good qualities you will, are, doubtless, still to be found amongst the habitués of this part of the theatre, the vast majority of them are, I take it, in every way distinctly lower in grade than their predecessors.
>
> (March, 1880, 136)

Moreover, Bendall thought that the demonstration at the Haymarket had done little to advance the drama. The abolishment of the pit was regarded by Bendall as "the step taken in a direction that is inevitable," one for which he could find no cause to regret.

The pit, however, found warm support from Frank A. Marshall, who thought that both the actors and the audience would be the poorer without the responsiveness of the pittites, and from the then editor, Clement Scott. Scott reported that he himself had sat in the second

circle one evening, and that the visibility had been most unsatisfactory. "Positively I could see nothing of the first act of 'Money,' except by standing up, and then I was howled down," he asserted.

Scott also had something to say about the Haymarket disturbance in the review of the play, which appeared in Our Play-Box. In it he expressed his satisfaction that the pit had displayed "sufficient courage to protest against the sudden curtailment of what they considered a privilege." He thought it would be a distinct "artistic"loss to abolish the pit.

Our Omnibus-Box of April, 1880, reported that "scores" of letters had been received thanking the editor for his support of the pit.

The pit served as the subject for another symposium discussion in August, 1880. The subject was phrased, "'The Police in the Pit.'--Can Such a System be Justified?" The first contributor to the symposium identified himself simply as "One of the Pit," but a note from the editor vouched for "the genuineness of the communication," and for the fact that the contributor represented the "strong feeling" of a number of playgoers. According to the spokesman for the pit, as a result of the failure of a play called Jacks and Jills at the Vaudeville Theatre--which was attributed to "'organized opposition'" on the part of the pit--the managers of the theatre, David James and Thomas Thorne, had placed policemen "in the right and left hand corners of the front row of the public pit benches," upon the first night of their next production, The Guv'nor. As the writer from the pit saw it, the policeman had been put in the pit "with the idea of overawing that part of the audience and stifling its criticism." When, according to the same writer, at the end of the first act, there was some hissing, these policemen ordered those

responsible to "turn out." Protests proved useless, and eventually all who had been sitting together in the front part of the pit, were ejected from the theatre. The pittite emphatically denied the accusations of an organized opposition, and asserted that "there was no justification whatever for these proceedings."

The two managers concerned, James and Thorne, were given a chance to present their side of the question. According to them, they were merely protecting the "real public" from the disturbances of "half-a-dozen mischievous young men . . . whose behaviour was virtually an offence to our audience." Said the two managers,

> That this reckless society . . . does occasionally visit our theatres, to disturb and not to criticise, is known to nearly every manager in London. More than that, the individuals of which it consists are easily and familiarly recognisable by the performers; and their favourite seats are looked to as that portion of the house from which observations (facetious in their estimation, but cruel to the artists) are bound to emanate.
>
> (August, 1880, 65)

The managers went on to affirm their belief in the rights of the public to express their feelings about a play.

> The public pays and is invited to witness a play, and to that public's judgment managers must bow. But that judgment must not be confounded with the action of half-a-dozen mischievous young men. . . .
>
> (August, 1880, 66)

Thorne and James were given warm support by "An Old First-Nighter," whom the editor identified as "an actor of eminence and a manager of wide experience." The "First-Nighter" thought it "monstrous that a handful of youths should presume to call themselves the 'pit,' and to arrogate to themselves the right to say 'we are the public.'"

"An Author's View" was expressed by Frank Marshall who declared that the stationing of policemen in a theatre, "with express directions to prevent the audience [sic] expressing disapprobation, is a violation of public right, which ought itself to be punished by the law." In Marshall's opinion, if applause was permitted in a theatre, then hissing should be also. With regard to the charges of an organized opposition, Marshall was of the opinion that such a venture was almost impossible to carry out and "exists for the most part only in the diseased mind of a self-conceited author or actor."

"A Comment from the Pit," signed A. Harvey pointed out one significant fact not hitherto stressed. This was that the press had "unanimously" condemned the plays in question.[4] Hence, said Harvey, the verdict of the pit had certainly not been unreasonable. And in conclusion he issued a warning to dramatists:

> . . . Authors should understand that second and third rate plays, especially from those who have led us to expect better things, will not be tolerated in these days of enlightenment and promise, even with the help of the police.
> (August, 1880, 74)

"A Word from a Critic" was signed by Joseph Knight. Knight appointed himself the "peacemaker" and in this role upheld the rights of the audience to express their approval and disapproval by applauding and hissing. On the other hand, Knight believed that the judgement of the audience should be given at the conclusion of the entire play; that "manifestations of disapproval should . . . be orderly"; that the

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[4]The reviewer of Jacks and Jills did condemn the play in the July, 1880, issue. However, The Guv'nor received a good review, although the critic did not see the first night performance. The Theatre, August, 1880, pp. 114-116.

decisions of the audience should be "just" but merciful. In addition Knight was in agreement with an earlier symposium participant that the composition of the pit had changed. Hence, in clinging to its traditional role of critic, the present-day pit should exercise leniency. "A majority of those . . . who in the time of 'She Stoops to Conquer,' went into the pit to look after the fortunes of the piece, would now be found in other portions of the theatre." With Knight's comments, the symposium ended.

From the statements of the symposium participants it is apparent that the late Victorian playgoer regarded it as his right and privilege to express disapproval by hissing and, conversely, to show his approval by applauding. That the matter of hissing was taken seriously can be seen from a study of the articles and comments on this subject in The Theatre. Our Omnibus-Box of September, 1880, reported that the privilege of hissing had been tested in a court case, and that the magistrate had upheld the right of the hisser. Said the Omnibus-Box, ". . . One of the bargains between public and proprietor--whether he own the stage, the play, or the building--is this long-established right of hissing." Dutton Cook, critic and dramatic historian, referred to the case mentioned above, and to others preceding it, all of which had firmly established the right to hiss. However, Cook pointed out that the manager had the right to expel undesirable patrons. Therefore Cook advised the audience "to control their more censorial emotions as much as possible, and, if they must hiss, to do their spiriting gently, and hiss after a moderate and pacific manner." (October, 1883, 178-184)

There is evidence that at least one audience did not heed Cook's temperate injunction. According to the review of The Spider's Web, "the pit, strong in its power, hissed the play off the stage in strict accordance with its just deserts." The anonymous reviewer heartily supported the pit. "To have given countenance to such a work would have been a premium on careless and thoughtless management," he said approvingly. (January, 1884, 40-41)

However, while the right to hiss was conceded, writers in The Theatre felt that there were certain ground rules, so to speak, which must be observed. An audience was granted the privilege of hissing whenever it disapproved of an indecent or blasphemous statement or gesture,[5] or whenever it considered a production to be shoddy beyond endurance, as in the case of The Spider's Web. However, it was definitely regarded as infra dig. for an audience to "call" for an author whose work had displeased, in order to hiss the unfortunate victim off the stage.[6] Notwithstanding, the March, 1880, Omnibus-Box says significantly, "Often and often, after a sad failure, authors have been rash enough to misjudge the mistaken compliment, and have been howled off the stage." Conditions did not improve perceptibly in this respect, for Clement Scott, writing in February, 1884, shows his distress in the following manner:

> Too often now-a-days the artist and author alike are mere playthings, to be tossed about hither and thither by an audience utterly indifferent to the

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[5]The Theatre, August, 1880, p. 71.

[6]See, for instance, Joseph Knight's comment, The Theatre, August, 1884, p. 57.

> dignity of dramatic art, and presumably careless of the personal feelings of those who endeavour to amuse them.
>
> (February, 1884, 63)

In October, 1889, J. T. Grein--best known to us today for his affiliation with the Independent Theatre movement--spoke out against humiliating dramatists for a very cogent reason.

> But hooting a man, destroying the vitality of a work . . . is an evil policy that cannot but injure the prospects of dramatic literature; for, in anathematising a novice's work an audience may nip in the bud an unripe but promising talent. . . .
>
> (October, 1889, 192)

Furthermore, it was not considered fair to express disapproval of a performer because certain aspects of his personal life had offended. The Omnibus-Box of August, 1883, published a strong reprimand sent in by the magazine's music critic, Beatty-Kingston. Referring to the persistent demonstrations of operatic audiences directed against the tenor Nicolini who was the beloved Patti's second husband, Beatty-Kingston commented:

> People who hiss an actor because he has the supreme good fortune to be beloved by a beautiful and gifted woman are more likely to be prompted by envy than by virtuous indignation. But, within the walls of the theatre, applause or its converse have to do with the actor's performance on the stage, not with his private adventures--a fact which British opera-goers of all social classes cannot be too earnestly reminded of, inasmuch as they are far too apt to let their prejudices interfere with their taste and judgment. . . .
>
> (August, 1883, 108)

Feeling as they did about the Englishman's inalienable right to hiss, the writers in The Theatre found it difficult to understand the less demonstrative American audiences. Joseph Hatton, describing an

American audience in 1878, observed that "though they have not learnt the civilized practice of hissing an artist or a play, they know how to show their disapprobation by rows of empty benches."[7] The playwright Bronson Howard also found an American audience disconcerting in its placidity.

> A member of a New York first night audience makes the French expression literal--he assists, and it is not his fault if his assistance is in vain. This characteristic makes an absolute failure in that city the most ghastly and formidable thing of its kind known to the civilized world. An author or manager can brace his nerves against the noisy indignation of a disgusted and demonstrative audience. He can endure less easily, but still endure, the tender silence of a grieved and disappointed audience. But what amount of writhing and gnashing of the teeth can express his feelings when an audience . . . calls up the curtain on the first, second, third, and fourth acts of a new play, and two-thirds of it quietly walk out of the house before the curtain rises on the fifth act?
>
> (August, 1879, 26)

However, in March, 1895, Walter Herries Pollock, a critic, gave signs of a change in attitude toward the practice of hissing. Referring to the American practice of expressing disapproval by walking out of the theatre, Pollock observed:

> Such an attitude cannot naturally be called offensive. It is a protest, but a silent one; and it is not open to the objection to hissing, which I have lately heard neatly put, that hissing ought not to be regarded as the negative of the positive called applause, but rather as a last resort, a weapon to be taken up against some gross breach of decorum, whether on the stage or among the audience.
>
> (March, 1895, 149)

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[7] The Theatre, October, 1878, p. 209. Hatton wrote another paper on American audiences for the May, 1881, issue. He commented again on the "odd" behavior of the American audience.

One wonders whether Pollock was ahead of his time in expressing these sentiments or whether he was merely recording the prevalent attitude of his time. More than likely, he was leading the way, so to speak.

To return to the August, 1880, symposium on the policemen in the pit, it is evident that one other controversial matter was considered by the various contributors. This was the charge made by authors and managers whose plays had been ill received, that they had been the victims of an "organized resistance." James Albery, the author of the ill-fated Jacks and Jills, had dashed "in front of the curtain to talk at random about organised oppositions and conspiracies against him." On that same occasion, May 29, 1880, one of the actor-managers had interrupted himself in the midst of a scene to reprove the audience for its conduct. The reviewer of the play, Clement Scott, had expressed vehement disapproval of the stand taken by the author and the manager. Scott declared in no uncertain terms that it had been a bad play, and it was that alone, that had aroused the "righteous indignation," of the patrons.[8]

There is ample evidence that the issue of organized resistance was raised from time to time by certain authors and managers who apparently could not accept the failure of a production as one of the inevitable risks of the theatre business. As late as February, 1897, Arthur William à Beckett gave the matter serious consideration. À Beckett's ideas have an unusual significance because he himself was a

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[8]Even Scott, however, eventually began to find fault with the pit. Our Omnibus-Box of February, 1888, strongly condemned the pit's lack of courtesy and fairness. "To see a woman in tears on the stage or an old friend paralysed with astonishment is not a pretty spectacle, and utterly opposed to that spirit of chivalry and fair play that once was the boast of Englishmen." Pp. 93-97.

dramatist as well as a critic with thirty years' experience in the theatre. As an author à Beckett could well sympathize with the disappointments engendered by a dramatic failure. However, he thought that "the true cause of a play's failure is its inherent weakness." Hence, he said, "managers with a grievance on this point are unduly sensitive." One is inclined to agree with Scott and à Beckett.

In short, the character of the pit had changed or was in the process of changing during the period covered by The Theatre. It became increasingly apparent that the pit's time-honoured critical capacities were lessened for two cogent reasons. First, the character of the playgoers in the pit had changed considerably from the fine types represented by Hazlitt and Lamb, who had exercised their critical capacities from the vantage point of the pit. Second, during this period, the managers were either abolishing the pit altogether or pushing that area further and further back under the balconies, so that the pit was no longer in intimate contact with the stage performers. In this connection the remarks of Beerbohm are pertinent. Referring to his experience in the pit, he says:

> Not until I was seated did I realise that the play had begun. Yes, there, at a distance of what seemed to be fifty dark miles or so, was a patch of yellowish light; and therein certain tiny figures were moving. They were twittering, too, these figures. . . . I strained my ears, I strained my eyes.[9]

In light of these facts, it is highly improbable that the occupants of the pit during the era of The Theatre could have been very reliable critics.

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[9]Max Beerbohm, op. cit., p. 426.

The giving of orders. Two other problems connected with the audience plagued the writers of The Theatre. They will be dealt with briefly. The first concerns the giving of orders, or complimentary tickets to playgoers. The Watch-Tower of September, 1878, commented on "the whole groups of tormentors who are always pestering . . . for 'orders,' and who are proud of the fact that they never pay to go into a theatre." According to the Watch-Tower, once these order-hunters have gotten in the habit of getting into the theatre by orders, then it is highly unlikely that they will ever again be willing to pay for their seats.

In the same issue, the playwright H. J. Byron defended the managerial practice of distributing orders. According to Byron, the sight of an empty or near-empty theatre was "depressing" to the audience and "disheartening" to the actor. Therefore, Byron argued that it was better to do some judicious "papering" of the house, as the practice was called. Moreover, Byron contended that if the manager took care to give orders "where they are valued, and to people who will probably be pleased with the performance," then these satisfied persons would advertise the play. Besides, the recipient of the free ticket was apt to bring along a friend who would pay for his ticket. So, Byron concluded, "The order system is in itself not the evil it is stated to be; its abuse may be so, but that is the manager's fault." (September, 1878, 111)

George Grossmith, Junior, an actor, wrote feelingly of being pestered by friends, acquaintances, and others who could not even claim the latter distinction, for free passes. If we may believe the actor,

most of the requests came for private boxes or stalls "for a Saturday night during the height of the play's success." Grossmith had a word of advice for his friends:

> True friends of an actor should bear this in mind, that he is expected to help to draw money to the theatre at which he appears, and that his managers very soon discover when he attracts nothing but "orders."
> (November, 1878, 286)

Managers and actors were not the only ones receiving requests for passes. The November, 1892, Notes of the Month column complained that editors of papers, particularly theatrical ones, were constantly besieged by "total strangers" for complimentary tickets. An article in February, 1894, inveighed against "light-hearted impostors" who try to obtain free tickets by posing as critics. The author urged the abolition of the "free list" altogether. (February, 1894, 64-69)

In 1896 Alfred Paterson expressed his belief that the problem posed by the so-called deadhead was likely to plague managers "for generations to come." Consequently he offered a suggestion to the managers for dealing with the deadheads. He proposed that those who receive free passes should be asked to contribute to the Actors' Benevolent Fund, "a most deserving charity." In Paterson's opinion his scheme would benefit both the ticket-cadger and the acting profession.

> The mere fact of it costing something . . . to be present at a performance is likely to make one pay more attention to the play than would be the case if one got in entirely free; and thus good would be done to those who produced the piece as well as to the institution for which the collection was made.
> (February, 1896, 82)

An article in the September issue of the same year again reviled the various species of deadheads for their ingratitude, in this fashion:

> These "order" cravers are never so satisfied as those who pay, and they are seldom heard to recommend a show; . . . .They seldom or never give a "hand" to the play or players, or have a good word for the management.
>
> (September, 1896, 150)

Audience etiquette. Another problem dealing with the audience which consistently vexed writers for The Theatre was what we might call the matter of theatre etiquette. The behavior of the late Victorian audiences was far from satisfactory, judging from the substance of the articles in the magazine. We have already seen that the pit was requested to be more courteous, but the other sections of the playhouse came in for their share of reprimands. Emily Faithfull severely chided the occupants of the stalls and boxes for carrying on conversations during the play and for compounding the felony by making late entrances to the play. Moreover, the "dandy of the nineteenth century" was chided for rushing past other people at the end of each act for a drink or a smoke, and then "returning with studied courtesy after the fresh act has commenced." Additionally, Miss Faithfull deplored the studied indifference and unresponsiveness of "our languid youths and insipid maidens of the gilded order." (September, 1879, 76-78)

Confessing that she had been "grieved" for some years at the "vagaries" of the audience, Lady Pollock had some acidic comments to make on this subject. She too complained about the lack of attention paid by the audience to the stage itself. She cited the "pedantic" playgoer "who knows every syllable of the text, and audibly checks the performance." The lady who continually fusses with her clothing and rustles her fan constantly; the playgoer who is so intent upon following the play with the book that "he neither hears nor sees, he does nothing

but hunt"; "the once-a-year playgoer, who is nervous, suspicious, and in a constant state of agitation"; all these--and others--were held up as horrible examples. (February, 1880, 81-83)

Obstreperous first night audiences were also taken to task for their behavior. Our Omnibus-Box of December, 1882, strongly protested the ridicule heaped on Alfred Tennyson upon the performance of his play, The Promise of May. The Omnibus-Box thought that a person of Tennyson's eminence and worth was deserving of respect at least, from the audience. However, a singularly inept management had contributed to the audience's ill temper beforehand by delaying the performance of the Laureate's work for an hour and a quarter. Yet Omnibus-Box did not regard this as sufficient extenuation for the defections of the audience.

Clement Scott began his article on first nights in the February, 1884, issue with this statement:

> Matters are coming to a crisis concerning first-night performances, and it is clear that there must be a reform sooner or later, if we do not desire to turn our theatres into bear-gardens, and wholly to degrade the character of English playhouses. (February, 1884, 61)

The editor went on to observe that the managers were disturbed by the commotions of the audience and that the players, "naturally anxious," were "frightened out of their lives." In Scott's opinion, the loss of "reverence" on the part of the audiences was largely attributable to the efforts of the gossip columnist.

> The disease that has eaten into the constitution of first-nights began when the audiences became a more favourite topic for comment than the actors, . . . when the public was asked to take more interest in Lady Bareacres' diamonds and Miss

> Montmorency's latest companion than in the play, which was not the thing at all.
> (February, 1884, 65)

And for this disease Scott confessed that he could see no cure.

The conditions which The Theatre lamented continued unabated, apparently. On the opening performance of Twelfth Night July 8, 1884, certain individuals in the pit took to hooting and howling in order to signify their disapproval, and singled out the highly respected Henry Irving for this opprobrium. This unfortunate turn of events stimulated a symposium discussion in the August, 1884, issue, to say nothing of criticism from Our Omnibus-Box. The three taking part in the symposium were all critics, Joseph Knight, Frank Marshall, and J. Palgrave Simpson. All were unanimous in excoriating the small but noisy band of howlers. As Simpson put it, "There was no reason why any discomfort should have occasioned the hooting of a beautiful play and a great actor; to speak of it as an expression of public opinion would be preposterous."

Despite the appeals to their better nature, despite, even appeals to the traditional English sense of fair play, the theatre audiences failed to reform. Evidence is to be found in articles which appeared in February, 1886; in July, 1889; and in May, 1897. The substance of these papers has already been given in earlier articles on this subject. From them it can be seen that all sections of the house--pit, gallery, stalls and boxes--continued their discourteous ways unstayed.

A National Theatre

Writing on February 22, 1902, Max Beerbohm commented, "The monotony of the outcry for a National Theatre is broken, now and again, by an outcry for a National School of Acting."[10] The pages of The Theatre reveal that both of these projects were being carefully studied from the first issues of the magazine. An article in the August, 1878, number took a very optimistic view of the possibilities of a subsidised theatre.

> There was a time, and that not so very long ago, when any proposal having this end in view could only have expected to meet with angry surprise, with laughing scorn, or at least with silent contempt. . . . There have, however, of late been several indications that the time has arrived when the arguments for and against some State recognition of the dramatic art may be soberly and fairly discussed. . . . The mere promise, however, of introducing the subject, no matter how badly and how ineffectively, to the consideration of Parliament, is something, in so far as it shows the direction in which the wind is thought to be veering; and a more important indication of what the public opinion of the future promises to be is afforded by a declaration made by Mr. Gladstone in a letter to this periodical last March.[11]
>
> (August, 1878, 7)

Besides these very favorable signs, the article also pointed out that opposition from "many men of mark and influence in the Church" was subsiding, now that the moral influence of the drama was being more widely recognized.

Moreover, the article indicated that suitable precedent had been established for governmental aid to the drama.

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[10]Max Beerbohm, op. cit., p. 195.

[11]In March, 1878, The Theatre was operating as a weekly, and hence Gladstone's letter does not come within the limits of the present study.

> For good or for evil, the State already interferes to do for us innumerable things that could, after a fashion, be done for us by private enterprise. . . . It has yet to be proved either that the Drama is unworthy of a subsidy in England, or that it would not benefit by any subsidy that it might obtain.
>
> (August, 1878, 8)

The opposition of those who favored private enterprise was acknowledged, but it was argued that no private agency could possibly be expected to accomplish the objectives of a national theatre.

> Does private enterprise find itself equal to the task of presenting the noblest English dramas by thorougly [sic] adequate companies all year round? Can a manager, who necessarily has a keen eye for profit, be expected to avoid the long-run system, the "star" system, and the system of discouraging all young playwrights and young players until their names are made? Can private enterprise found a school of acting, except in the limited sense in which a theatre . . . gives to its performances a characteristic manner of its own?
>
> (August, 1878, 9)

Moreover, the superiority of the Théâtre Française in personnel and in repertoire was attributed to the fact that it was subsidised. In return for high prestige, steady employment, ample leisure time, and the prospects of a pension upon retirement, the French actors and actresses were willing to accept "comparative smallness of salary." These advantages, alleged to be the basis of the success of the Théâtre, were obtainable only by government support.

In the meanwhile, the article concluded hopefully, "all that we can do is to recognise and appreciate every little advance made by individual effort to approach the achievement of our ideal theatre, and to keep steadily in view the artistic ends which we hope one day to see accomplished by a subsidised national theatre."

Opposition to the idea of a national theatre was voiced in the following month by H. J. Byron, a popular playwright of the time. He stated his position as follows:

> Such an institution as a national theatre would inevitably collapse amidst heartburnings, jealousies, conflict of opinions, and general chaos. The British public and the British playgoer would look upon the national scheme as something that "ought to be supported;" but would inevitably keep away as they always do when they are told they should go anywhere to be "improved."
>
> (September, 1878, 112)

In that same year--1878--The Theatre published the salient points of a paper read by George Godwin, F.R.S., at the Social Science Congress, in which he warmly advocated the establishment of a subsidised theatre. He stressed the performance of plays "of the highest character" and service as a school for players as the two principal benefits to be derived from a theatre of this sort. Godwin was particularly distressed that the English stage was "disgraced" by the presence of incompetent performers who owed their stage careers to qualities other than the ability to act. The consciousness of French superiority in acting is evident in this paper also.

> Indifferent as the French parterre may be to the immorality of a libretto, complacently as it may contemplate the human (female) form divine, liberally developed by the fair performers in it, incapacity is an offence immediately visited with indignant sibilation.
>
> (December, 1878, 347)

Although Hawkins, then editor of the magazine, was very much in favor of a national theatre, he is to be commended for allowing those opposed to the movement to have their say also. Such a one was Henry Peat, who, while acknowledging that managers were motivated by commercial

rather than artistic considerations, felt that hopes of a reform by means of subsidization were "visionary, or at least, destined to no early fulfilment." According to Peat, large segments of the populace were prejudiced against any sort of theatre, and, besides, "denunciations . . . would ring from the pulpit over the length and breadth of the land." More important, Peat thought that there would be practical difficulties in running a State theatre. He predicted gloomily that the prospects of the Government's appointing a manager with the proper artistic qualifications were very dim indeed. Moreover, he foresaw the possibilities of the theatre's becoming the last refuge of players whose powers were fast fading.

> . . . The mode in which Government appointments are made in our country, where, except in the case of places open to competition, interest too often prevails over merit, renders it far from probable that the highest considerations would guide the Government in the all-important selection of the first manager of a newly-established national theatre. . . . There would probably be found in the company many a worn-out actor of the so-called legitimate school, who had mouthed and ranted himself into a kind of reputation, and who would now be secured the privilege of making a painful display of his decaying powers before an audience too good-natured to recognise the senile incapacity of an old favourite.
>
> (February, 1879, 29)

Additionally, Peat asserted that even in France the Odéon, another national theatre, was a "striking instance" of managerial abuse of the system. Therefore, he suggested that a group of "men of wealth and artistic taste" might establish a theatre which would correct the evils of the present system without incurring "the evils and perils of State management." The example of the Duke of Meiningen's theatre was cited as one worthy of emulation.

The Watch-Tower of April, 1879, was devoted to the subject of the national theatre. The need for such a theatre was re-emphasized.

> What is wanted is a theatre which can deliberately set itself to lead rather than to follow the public taste, which can afford to disregard the passing popularity of the moment, and which can rely on the worthiness of its self-imposed tasks and the artistic adequacy of their accomplishment.
> (April, 1879, 147)

Referring to a meeting apparently convened at Covent Garden for the purpose of furthering the movement, the Watch-Tower remarked that the meeting had been far from a success, mainly because the leading actors and managers had not been in attendance. It had been "amicable" of the Marquis Townshend to accept the post of president, but the Watch-Tower questioned the appropriateness of his selection. The suggestion that a theatre be established before requesting a subsidy was regarded as judicious, but the support of those most deeply concerned was of primary importance.

> What we shall require to ascertain before asking that a national permanence is given to the undertaking is, that the best of our actors and actresses and managers are enlisted in its cause either from an active share in its proceeding or for scarcely less valuable countenance and support.
> (April, 1879, 149-150)

There, seemingly, the matter rested since no more is heard of the subject, until September, 1893, when what Beerbohm would call another "outcry" was raised. William Poel started things rolling with an article expounding the functions of a national theatre. As Poel saw them, these functions were two in number: to preserve the dramatic masterpieces and keep traditions of the past alive, and to "lead popular thought in high and ennobling directions." Hence, the writer felt that the policy of the

theatre should be essentially conservative, taking care that the realistic should not supersede the poetic.

> The extravagance of realism, so often thought healthy and natural, is with scarcely any exception only perverse sentimentality, only the expression, inartistic at best, of an enervated and distorted feeling, an extravagant and debased sentiment in comparison with which the sentiment of Shakespeare is truly refreshing and inspiring.
>
> (September, 1893, 165)

Clearly, there were as many ideas of what the national theatre should do as there were supporters for its establishment.

In November, 1894, there came support from a quarter whose absence had been lamented earlier. Henry Irving, probably the most highly respected actor of the day, advocated the founding of a municipal theatre in a speech delivered to the Walshall Literary Institute. The actor noted that the theatre was taken for granted as a part of community life on the continent. Since--Irving reasoned--the municipality already provides the public with such essentials as gas, water, lodging houses, museums and art galleries, why should it not provide a theatre also? The values of a municipal theatre would be to maintain high artistic standards, to train actors, and "preserve the distinction between the true form of the drama and the various entertainments which pass under its name." (November, 1894, 216-220)

Interestingly, the Watch-Tower, commenting on Irving's proposition in the same issue, was far from enthusiastic. The Watch-Tower felt that Irving was asking too much at present, since the artistic demands of such an enterprise would be too burdensome for the municipal bodies to carry out. Moreover, the Watch-Tower considered a theatre to be more

complex than an art gallery. Even more significant, it was felt that public sentiment was not sufficiently strong for such a project.

The next month's Echoes from the Green Room recorded Irving's answer to his critics. He wanted the drama to have the same public recognition as the other fine arts. Also, as he envisioned it, the proposed theatre would be "'under the control of a cultivated and independent director--a man with artistic instincts and a sufficiently free hand.'" (December, 1894, 334)

Inspired by Irving's advocacy of a municipal theatre, Walter Herries Pollock made use of two anecdotes to illustrate "some matters not known perhaps to every person who has taken part in the controversy." Pollock's main contention was that the manager of a subsidised theatre was in a most difficult situation.

> He has to bear the brunt in his own sole person of anything that goes wrong, or seems to the public on any night to go wrong, in the performance of opera or drama. . . . Add to this the worries that every manager must be prepared to endure from jealousies and factions in the company, and you then have still an incomplete notion of all that a contractor-manager under the French Municipal Theatre arrangement has to combat.
>
> (January, 1895, 16)

Another opponent of the subsidised theatre was one of the former editors of The Theatre, Clement Scott. He spoke in favor of maintaining the status quo, since he felt that the interests of art would not be much better served by a change in the present system. "For the present," said Scott, "we can get on very well without state-aided theatres or actress-manageresses. The actor-manager and the occasional literary and dramatic expert have done their work remarkably well." (May, 1895, 267)

Scott's attitude probably explains the long silence on this subject preserved by the magazine during the years of his editorship.

An article by Sir Edward Russell in May, 1897, began with a statement which renewed interest in the endowed-theatre controversy. "If the affairs of the nation could be directed with full intelligence," began Russell, "one theatre at least, managed as the Lyceum Theatre is now managed, would be subsidised by the State." Fully realizing that the "difficulties are obvious and the idea is Utopian," Russell pointed out that there were many hazards in the production of "standard masterpieces." What with the ever-possible "degradations" of public taste, Russell thought that the present trend toward the masterpieces was attributable more to the managers than to the public. Hence, he concluded, "the supply of entertainment of this highest class is always liable to cease." (May, 1897, 249)

Taking his cue from Russell's first statement quoted above, J. F. Nisbet, a critic, jumped into the fray with the thought that Sir Edward was too "expert a politician" to think that a subsidised theatre would be feasible except "only under an autocracy." According to Nisbet, the artistic standards to be maintained in the national theatre would merely be "a euphemism for unpopular art." As he saw it, the many would be asked to support a project which would appeal only to the few.

> No tax could nowadays be levied upon the people which could not be shown to be for the popular benefit, and as regards the producing of a special and, above all, an unpopular form of drama, the question of a subsidy would be an extremely debatable one.
>
> (June, 1897, 315)

Moreover, if the public is asked to support the national theatre, then the public must be given the kind of drama it wants.

> If the great heart of the people goes out to Mr. Albert Chevalier, Mr. Gus Elen, and the excellent Teetotum troupe, who shall say that they ought not to be subsidised? It is they, assuredly, or such as they, who would obtain the popular vote through which alone a donation of public money could be administered.
> (June, 1879, 316)

Nisbet concluded by advising those who yearned for a subsidised theatre to pin their hopes upon the generosity of "a millionaire or a syndicate of art-loving stockbrokers."

Nisbet drew a quick response from Russell, whose remarks could only have elicited approval from his constituents. An ideal, said Sir Edward, was worth working towards even though it could never be realised. Moreover, Russell pointed out that "one never knows what approaches to fully developed government may be made." In any event, Russell accused Nisbet of basing his argument upon "want of sympathy with the Democracy," and of jumping to conclusions about what the populace would or would not support. Speaking of those "who like music-hall turns," Russell asserted:

> Many of them are quite sufficiently intelligent, and most of them might be made so, to understand that Sir Henry Irving, for whom they have an immense respect, or any other manager of great authority and classical taste, might very fairly be enabled by the State to produce continuously great dramatic works, without ever having to resort to inferior enterprises in order to bring the balance out on the right side.
> (July, 1897, 13)

Referring to the Russell-Nisbet controversy over an endowed theatre, Echoes from the Green Room commented, "The discussion is one of interest, even if it should lead to no practical results." (July, 1897, 49) With that, one should have to agree.

A Dramatic Academy

The matter of a dramatic academy was closely allied with the agitation for an endowed theatre. Indeed, in the minds of some, the school for actors was a necessary adjunct of the national municipal theatre. However, the subject was also considered independently. Scott, one of the editors of the magazine, supported the movement for a dramatic school but did not favor the establishment of a national theatre.

Interest in a prospective dramatic school was maintained throughout the lifetime of The Theatre. The Watch-Tower of September, 1879, pointed out that the aspiring young actor had only two dubious sources to which he could turn for much-needed training, the amateur production and "some soi-disant teacher of dramatic art." The result was that generally speaking, the English stage, unlike the French, lacked evidence of training in "modulation, pronunciation, and voice-management," as well as uniformity of acting style. Consequently, the Watch-Tower plumped for a training school where the would-be Roscius could learn the "principles of elocution" and "the manners peculiar to different ages and to different conditions of society." As far as the writer was concerned such an institution could be run by either private or public enterprise.

Stimulated by the offer made by a Mrs. Pffeiffer, "a lady of excellent taste and discretion," of the sum of one thousand pounds as a start in the regeneration of the stage, Clement Scott strongly advocated the use of this sum for the founding of a "highly educated and cultured dramatic nursery." He too found the majority of actors miserably lacking in the elements of dramatic technique.

> Half the young men on the stage at present should go back to school and be taught to read. They should attend the class-room and study English literature in order to acquire style. It is useless putting good work before them, for they do not understand it. . . .
>
> (November, 1879, 201)

Hence Scott believed that "courses of lectures by professors of various branches of art, libraries of costume and reference, lessons in fencing and deportment, and a theatre with practical instruction, would be of immense and immediate advantage."

All this was apparently too much for Dutton Cook, who hastened to throw some cold water upon the infant bonfire lit by Scott and other enthusiasts. With regard to a state-theatre and a "Thespian Academy," Cook declared that neither proposal has a "very feasible air, and [they] are founded upon rather mistaken estimates of the actor and his art." He pointed out that there were already available reference libraries and a sufficient number of language teachers. Since, he said, acting is not an "exact science," eventually the young actor must "depend upon his own individual exertions." Asked Cook,

> Will he be the better and stronger for the hot-house training he has received? Will not the Thespian Academy be open to the charges brought against the other academies of fine art, to the effect that they "perpetuate mannerism, cramp originality, and fetter genius"?
>
> (December, 1879, 269)

During the year 1880 two schemes were presented--both by professors--proposing essentially the same things. Both men wanted to form a society or institute for actors which would give the acting profession suitable prestige and recognition, and to establish a dramatic academy. Professor Henry Morley proposed that the first Fellows be composed of "eight of the chief English actors, any eight well-known dramatic

authors, and any eight known men of letters who are interested in the welfare of the English stage, and who are the first to agree to work together for the founding of the Institute." According to Morley, the primary duty of the institute would be to establish a school to train young actors, following the plan used by the Royal Academy for the training of young artists. The founding of a library would be a necessary adjunct to the dramatic academy. Morley also stated that he, among others, had called a meeting of managers and actors, which "left the future safe" in the appointment of a committee of actors. This committee was to do further work on the project and then report to "a meeting of the whole profession." (February, 1880, 76-79)

Despite the professor's optimism, his plan apparently came to naught, for in November of that same year The Theatre called the attention of its readers to the subject of a "Royal Dramatic Society," as proposed by Professor Fleeming Jenkin, F.R.S., in a paper read before the Social Science Congress. In it Jenkin had suggested the founding of a Royal Dramatic Society "'not primarily as a school, but as a body, representing the profession.'" Although the professor had gone so far as to "'write out drafts for a few by-laws,'" he stressed the fact that the acting profession should conduct its own affairs. However, Jenkin thought it judicious to have the first group of actor-Fellows selected by a committee composed of those outside of the profession. The Theatre quoted Jenkin as follows:

> "It might be difficult for a body of actors and actresses, self-selected and self-constituted, to come forward and claim this honour. A mere professional committee . . . would provide at least one possible way of starting the scheme; and if

> the members of this committee were men of acknowledged weight, the profession might accept even their blunders of selection with respect--especially as, by the mode of election suggested, these errors might soon be remedied by the profession itself."
>
> (November, 1880, 274)

In the same issue W. E. Henley hailed the Jenkin scheme with unmitigated joy. If we may believe Henley, Jenkin had found the solution to every problem vexing the acting profession and its supporters.

> What Professor Jenkin aims at is the final recognition of histrionics as a serious profession, by the institution of a corporate body which shall do for the art of acting what is done by the Royal Academy for the arts of painting and sculpture, and by the College of Physicians for the science of medicine. . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . As a teaching body the Society might take pattern in several ways by the Conservatoire and the Société de la Comédie-Française . . . and it would create, organise, and control a complete system of instruction. . . . It would thus be rendered capable of receiving gifts and bequests for educational purposes, and entitled to ask for a Government grant.
>
> (November, 1880, 275-277)

In February, 1882, Hamilton Aïdé, a playwright, told the readers of The Theatre that plans were afoot for the creation of a School of Dramatic Art which would have for its aim the "technical education, on the most moderate terms" of all who wished to become actors. The writer explained that "the real strength of the undertaking" lay in the fact that the General Committee was to be composed of "gentlemen" with no stage connections whatsoever. Said Aïdé, ". . . It is hoped that such names as Lord Wharncliffe, Lord Lytton, Lord Rowton, Alfred Tennyson, Mathew Arnold, Henry Morley, Wilkie Collins, . . . and many others will be sufficient evidence of the

character of the undertaking." The board chosen to plan the curriculum was to consist of such ornaments of the stage as Mr. Toole, Mrs. Stirling, Miss Genevieve Ward, and others. In addition, there was to be a group of ladies "who have promised their personal supervision, and whose attendance at the school occasionally will, it is felt, be of great value, as well as an encouragement to the female students." These ladies would include Lady (Theodore) Martin, Mrs. Fanny Kemble, and Miss Mary Boyle.

The cooperation of the "eminent dramatic artists" was solicited. "With that help," asserted Aïdé, "we feel confident that the stage will not be a refuge for intellectual destitution, as it now threatens to become."

A secondary benefit to be derived from the lectures to be delivered at the School, was to be the gradual enlightenment of audiences. "Our audiences . . . require some training to distinguish and to appreciate." (February, 1882, 73-76)

In October, 1882, Clement Scott gave a personal report of the School of Dramatic Art now about to open its doors to pupils who had enrolled and had submitted "satisfactory references." Scott reported that the two men appointed by the executive committee to secure a suitable site for the school had succeeded in finding "the very best possible place for the purpose in all London." The curriculum for the first term would include lessons in elocution; in fencing and dancing, both of which were to be taught in "a magnificent ball-room with echoing rafters"; and in stage gesture. Additionally, there were to be lectures on "Subjects of Dramatic interest," to which the public would be admitted upon the payment of a fee. Both ladies and gentlemen

were to be enrolled in the achool, but they would not attend classes together. It was sternly emphasized that the School was to be "a place for work and not for talk," and the pupils were expected to quit the premises as soon as they had completed their day's classwork.

There was a strong hint that not all of the acting profession was in favor of the new School of Dramatic Art. The Omnibus-Box of November, 1882, quoted W. Davenport Adams who supported the school.

> "The tone and position of the profession will be raised when it consists largely, if not exclusively, of persons who have been trained by accomplished teachers in the art they practise."
> (November, 1882, 309)

Besides, so Adams stated, training of actors would benefit the public, for "why should the public be a sort of corpus vile for the novice to make his experiments upon?" In conclusion Adams declared that training was required for other professions such as the law or medicine; therefore, training might reasonably be a requisite for a dramatic career. (November, 1882, 309-310)

It is known that the School of Dramatic Art carried on for at least a term, for Our Omnibus-Box reported that a "Speech Day" had brought the first term to a successful close on December twenty-first. After giving a brief critique of the individual performances, the Omnibus-Box concluded: "This first Speech Day augured well for the future of the Dramatic School of Art." (February, 1883, 133-134)

The Theatre does not tell us to what end this School of Dramatic Art came, but there is evidence that it did not solve the problem which had inspired its founding. Two articles, written respectively in 1888 and 1890, show that the training of young actors was a subject still

very much alive. In an article entitled "The Actor at School," Henry Murray again considered the subject of the English Conservatoire, to be found upon the pattern set by the French Conservatoire. For his text Murray took a statement made by a prominent French actor to the highly respected French critic, Sarcey, that the teaching at the French institution "'sustains the feeble and does not arrest the strong.'" In Murray's opinion, the training at the French Conservatoire did repress the "individual eccentricity" of the actors, thus creating a dead level of uniformity.

> The teaching leaves far too little to the natural intelligence of the pupil. For the expression of each emotion it furnishes him with a set of facial and gesticulatory movements, and so carefully drills him into their use that he loses the power of finding for himself expressions and movements more consonant with his proper artistic individuality.
> (February, 1888, 74)

If we may believe Murray, even the best and most individualistic of the French actors, Mounet-Sully, was hampered by the acting conventions learned in youth. Murray asserted that given the part Mounet-Sully would play, he--Murray--would be able to predict exactly how the actor would play it.

> Give me the MS. of a new part in which he has never appeared, and I will undertake to indicate the exact lines at which he will bring his heels together, fold his arms, or extend his right arm in a straight line from the shoulder. He performs these hackneyed gestures with more life and naturalness than other actors have at their command, but his early training prevents him from using the perfectly free and unconstrained movements which one of his genius, unhampered by it, would be certain to find.
> (February, 1888, 74-75)

As for the actors with little or no talent, Murray had little charity for them. He saw no reason to cloak their mediocrity with the

veneer of a set of conventional rules. Indeed he thought the policy of eliminating incompetents "by the potent law of natural selection" was the better course. "Frank incapacity to express emotion by any means whatsoever is hardly more painful than the round of stale little tricks with which Conservatoire training endows the incapables of the French Stage," he asserted.

In the second of the two articles, the heretofore despised amateur stage was advanced by B. W. Findon as a possible training school for the acting aspirant. Findon was fully cognizant of the faults of the amateur theatre, but he pointed out that with the decline of the stock company and the present system of long runs--a trend much and frequently lamented--the neophytes in the profession had very little opportunity to gain experience in a variety of roles. Accordingly, rather than a state-supported school, which he thought would fail "in an artistic sense," the writer declared that "the future School of Dramatic Art is the amateur club." Findon suggested that a "Grand Central Club" be formed to which the amateur clubs could be admitted. This Grand Central Club scheme would necessitate the active support of the London managers, it was emphasized.

> But, the club must, above all things, have the active support of the theatrical manager. It must be clearly and distinctly understood that he will regard it as his recruiting ground, and that it shall be to the stage what our great military schools are to the army.
>
> (August, 1890, 67)

In 1893, certain members of the acting profession were themselves becoming aware of the necessity to train budding actors. In fact, Findon's article had quoted Henry Irving to the effect that there

was no place for the young actor to get much-needed training. (August, 1890, 65) George Alexander, a well-known actor-manager, spoke of the need for young actors to serve a period of apprenticeship, for which the actor would be eligible only upon the passing of a preliminary examination. Alexander declared a dramatic school to be "exactly what is wanted in England at the present time." He described the school as follows:

> Such an institution would be aided and supported by our leading actors, who would no more hesitate to give their time aiding such a valuable school by "coaching" the aspirants, and stage-managering the plays in which they appeared. . . .
> (January, 1893, 55)

As Alexander saw it, the young aspirant would first enroll in the school and then appear for his preliminary examinations before a committee, the composition of which the writer failed to make specific. Those found to be incompetent would then be eliminated, while those with promise would be apprenticed for further training.

On the other hand, Kate Rorke, an actress, had very little regard for a dramatic academy. She pointed out that the teachers for such a school would be selected from amongst the leading actor-managers, "the masters of their craft." These men were all too "busy" to give any time to teaching. Hence, she thought that the stage itself provided the best school for the actor. The Theatre quoted the actress as follows:

> "As far as I can see, with my short experience, the only academy of any value is the stage itself. . . . You cannot expect a manager to accept the services of an academy-bred young man or woman, turned out in a stereotyped way like a score of fellow students, and not possessed of the slightest experience as far as actual performance in plays is concerned."
> (June, 1893, 308)

William Poel agreed with his fellow contributors that there was need for actor training, but found some new causes for the neglect of this essential stage requisite. He blamed the new trend toward "natural" acting and the public's uncritical acceptance of it.

> That natural acting just now is in vogue, and has many supporters among the public is no argument in its favor except to prove that unskilled men and women may be able to act with some success by the aid of paper hangings, bric-a-brac, and cushions. Indeed there is little training needed to cater for a certain section of the public who refine upon their feelings until anything in the un-understandable way will go down with them.
> (May, 1893, 274)

Furthermore, Poel thought that the current trend did not favour the establishment of a dramatic school. He believed the "feeling of independence which is now rife in all countries," to be dangerous to art only so far as it "leads men in the wrong direction." In Poel's words, "it leads them to think not only that men must not be coerced, but also that they need not be taught." Altogether the situation looked very dark indeed as Poel saw it.

However, the critic Edward F. Spence contributed a paper a few months later, in which he compared the recently departed Comédie Française company with the better English actors of the day, and decided that the standard of English acting was on a par with that of the French. Hence, Spence came to the conclusion that "on the assumption of equal natural capacity for acting a training school for actors is not needed in England." Spence professed himself to be unmotivated by "the false patriotism that leads some people to decry foreign work disingenuously." (August, 1893, 73-80)

There the matter rested--at least as far as The Theatre was concerned. As Beerbohm testified in 1902, however, there were to be other

"outcries" raised on this controversial subject.

Concerning the Dramatists

Ernest B. Finch has a significant comment to make about the dramatic work of 1850-1870, the period which preceded the era of The Theatre magazine.

> . . . The great weakness of the English stage lay in the quality of its writers. Men of literary talent were not attracted to the theatre. Such fame as came with the writing of a successful play was too ephemeral to justify the labor which went into constructing it. More significant, public demands were so indiscriminating that most men of literary talent did not care to deal with the materials which constituted regular theatrical fare. . . .
>
> It is not surprising that, feeling as they did about the dominant position of the author, the critics of the mid-Victorian theatre should be so much concerned with the quality of the plays to be produced on the London stages.[12]

In 1878, writers in The Theatre were still concerned about the literary quality of the drama. Frank A. Marshall lamented that "the acted drama of our day has ceased to pretend to any literary merit." Moreover, Marshall continued, "Truth to tell, the dramatic faculty does not seem to exist among our poets to any great extent." The poets of the day, Sir Henry Taylor, Robert Browning, Alfred Tennyson had had little success with their dramatic works. Swinburne, who had shown promise, had "frittered away his magnificent genius in monstrous contortions of revolt against the temperance and decency of art."

The causes for this distressing situation were not hard to discover, if Marshall can be believed. First, the playwrights could not

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[12]Ernest Bliss Finch, "The Mid-Victorian Theatre as Seen by Its Critics 1850-1870" (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, Cornell University, 1951), p. 532.

print or publish their plays at the time of their production, for fear of losing the right of representation; thus, the dramatist could not touch the reading public, not to mention the "sober judgments of the more intellectual members of his audience." As a consequence of the loss of the reading market the dramatists have little financial inducement to write plays. Besides, the play itself did not pay as well as it had formerly.

A second cause for the decline of the literary drama could be found, according to Marshall, in the low esteem in which current dramatists were held. Marshall pointed out that T. W. Robertson, "the most original . . . on the whole, the most successful dramatist of our time," had received little literary recognition. On the other hand the poorest poet or novelist "affects" to have little regard for the playwright. This attitude was a reflection of the attitude of the so-called cultivated elements of society.

In addition, there was so little premium for creative writing that the adapter of French drama, who literally hacked up the original, enjoyed as much prestige as the man who attempted to do original work. About French drama, Marshall had this to say:

> By all means let us have the best works of French dramatists performed on our stage; but let us see them as the author wrote them. Men like Victorien Sardou, Emile Augier, or Meilhac and Halévy wrote in the spirit of true artists; and neither art nor morality gains anything by the quasi-purifying process of evisceration to which their works are subjected.
>
> (August, 1878, 26)

Marshall's paper ended with the statement that the situation would probably not be rectified until "plays can be printed as literary

works and recognised as such." He did not, however, offer an explanation as to who or what was hindering the printing of plays.

A month later, Lady Hardy solidly backed Marshall up in his views on French adaptations which had little of their original Gallic flavor by the time they reached the English stage. She too regretted the fact that native English talent had not been encouraged. Lady Hardy thought there was "no lack of dramatic force and fire in the generation of today." While she deplored the wasting of "much genial, racy talent" in "vulgar burlesque or farcical follies," indicative of the current low dramatic taste, she thought that the public was groveling in "whatever garbage falls its way" merely because nothing better was placed before it. Lady Hardy was sure that when "poetical romantic plays or high-toned domestic drama" came to the fore, the public would "flock" to see them. Lest Lady Hardy be misunderstood, it should be remembered that a burlesque merely referred to a parody of a current production. The English adaptation of one of Sardou's plays, Diplomacy, was burlesqued by F. C. Burnand, who called his work Diplunacy. There is a possibility that Lady Hardy was a bit optimistic in her certainty that the burlesque audience would instantly switch to the higher forms of drama. It would be far more likely that the latter would attract instead the audience which was remaining away altogether from the theatre because nothing better than the burlesque and the French drama were being given.

A new cause was found for the sad state to which English drama had fallen by Sydney Grundy, who believed managerial timidity to be basically at fault. The cost of production was so high that managers were reluctant to venture upon original work when they could take a much safer course in producing a play which had already had success

elsewhere and had accordingly been well advertised. Moreover, charged Grundy, the managers accept the work of a "sacred circle" and scorn the efforts of "the crowd of outside authors who have never pierced the barrier at all." And these members of the inner circle can make as much money doing adaptations as writing original plays.

> Young writers, as a rule, begin by being original; but they soon see the error of their ways. In adaptation lies their only chance.
> (November, 1878, 275)

The critics were not exempt from Grundy's condemnation. He thought that the attitude of the critics toward the experimental morning performances featuring new work had successfully stifled this promising movement.

In Grundy's opinion, under these difficult circumstances, "there is quite as much originality in modern English drama as can reasonably be expected." He cited Byron, Wills, Taylor, Burnand, Marshall, Dubourg, and Meritt as men who have done original work. "As for Mr. Gilbert," said Grundy, "he is original to the point of eccentricity." However, those wiching for more original work should see to it that the managerial system is changed in such a way as to permit the acceptance of a greater number of playwrights. Grundy seems here to be assuming that quantity means quality, an assumption not necessarily justified.

The December Watch-Tower of 1878 disclosed that at least one French author, Sardou, was unhappy over what had been done to his play Dora when "the Brothers Rowe" had adapted it for the English stage under the name of Diplomacy. One of "the Brothers Rowe" was Clement Scott, the same who later edited The Theatre. Sardou wanted to indict the adapters of Dora for spoiling his play in the course of their alterations. Watch-Tower thought that Sardou's "hyper-sensitiveness" was due

to the success the English version had had. But Watch-Tower seems to contradict itself in the very next sentence when it says: "For Diplomacy is not Dora, and Dora is not Diplomacy." This would certainly seem to support Sardou's contentions.

Watch-Tower then proceeded to indicate the differences between the two plays "and to try and ascertain how far the English adapters were justified in their own interests, for the sake of the management, and out of respect for the public, in altering the dramatic scheme which M. Sardou had deliberately propounded." First of all, the adapters had had to face the "serious" problem of the length of the play. It was asserted that the English public would not accept the five-act play, and hence the Rowes had solved the problem by excising the second act, one described as "so dull, so inconsequent, so purely conversational, . . . that by cutting it boldly out they shortened their play and cut off the one weak branch of Dora." Watch-Tower summed up the main differences between the two plays in these words:

> The former [Diplomacy] is a shorter play, and so better adapted for the Prince of Wales's Theatre. The Eastern complication has been substituted for Versailles politics. The principal characters are Englishmen instead of Frenchmen. The two leading male characters are brothers instead of friends, thus giving a vigour and intensity to the great scenes of the play in which they are engaged. (December, 1878, 331)

From the tone of the excerpt above, the Watch-Tower clearly sided with the adapters. If we may believe the Tower, the success of Diplomacy had justified the Rowes' actions. This is merely another way of saying that the end justifies the means, or so it would seem.

> . . . They had not to study a French but an English audience. For Parisian politics no one here cared one straw, for the Eastern Question everyone last

> January cared a very great deal: The English audience did not particularly care to study M. Sardou's artistic method, but to see a good play; and the verdict of Tottenham Court Road has been echoed by crowded houses in every provincial town in England, and in all the chief cities of America.
>
> (December, 1878, 331)

In the light of the extensive alterations that seemed necessary in order to please an English audience, one might be tempted to ask why the Rowes didn't simply write their own play. The question seems to be all the more fitting if the Tower's assertion that "French society and English society . . . are as wide apart as if the Atlantic or Pacific Ocean flowed between," can be accepted. Moreover, the Watch-Tower did not reveal whether the Rowes had obtained Sardou's permission to adapt his play. The implication is that they did not; and if they had, Sardou had had no opportunity to approve of the adaptation. Despite the Tower's sterling approval of the actions of the adapters, justice would seem to be on Sardou's side, in both an artistic and a moral sense.

The Watch-Tower of January, 1879, insisted that the dramatic activities of the past year showed promise "even if the actual achievement had been limited in scope." First of all the return of "poetry" to the stage was hailed as encouraging. Then, too, the "ingenuity" of the Rowes in achieving what was "to all intents and purposes an English play built upon French foundations," was lauded. Also the purity of British parodies was praiseworthy. Nevertheless, it was conceded that the actors had made greater progress than had the dramatists in the year just past.

The subject of the dearth of original dramatists continued to hold the attention of the dramatic world. Watch-Tower of February,

1879, commented on a letter written by F. C. Burnand, previously mentioned as one of the "original" playwrights of the age. Burnand had attributed the current fare at the theatres--which consisted largely of French adaptations and revivals of stale English plays--to the managerial preference for Gallic adaptations. Nevertheless, the Tower reminded Burnand that if the quality of English writing were of a higher order, the managers would not need to fear the risks of producing the native drama.

> The managers are, after all, only anxious to be on the safe side; and if our playwrights were a little more uniformly strong in their creative efforts, the safe side would soon be considered to be in the direction of English plays written for English playgoers. (February, 1879, 4)

Burnand himself was a Round Table contributor during the same month. He proposed a scheme which he had worked out for the paying of collaborators in playwriting. In Burnand's scheme the English adapter of a French work would be regarded as a collaborator with his French colleague, and paid accordingly. However, he thought that with the increased returns which his plan would provide, English writers might be induced to work together on original work. However, it would appear that the advantage would still lie with the adapter, since it was generally conceded that adapting took less time and required less effort than original writing did. (February, 1879, 14-17)

The Watch-Tower of March, 1879, commented on the remarks of two other playwrights and a manager. W. S. Gilbert--in later years Arthur Sullivan's collaborator--thought that authors with "'an established reputation'" ought not to be required to produce the manuscript of the play <u>in toto</u> to a manager before the latter made his decision on it.

The Watch-Tower, oddly enough, agreed with him "that a dramatist of position ought not to be asked to submit to a condition appropriate only to the efforts of the tyro." In the Watch-Tower's opinion, the managers had become spoiled in that they could see a Parisian play on the stage before deciding to purchase it for their theatres. The situation gave signs, said the Tower, of rectifying itself inasmuch as the French playwrights were now beginning to sell the rights of adaptation before their plays were produced in Paris.

The manager, Bancroft, was given a pat on the back by the Tower for "the fair case" which he had made for himself in the "encouragement" he had afforded English talent. However, Bancroft was rebuked for his "cynical vein" in declaring that the audience wanted a good play, regardless of its source. Nevertheless Watch-Tower's answer seems somewhat irrelevant:

> But can it be denied that it is of the very utmost importance that, caeteris paribus, the English original playwright should have at least as good a chance as his French rival of having his work produced upon our stage?
>
> (March, 1879, 73)

The Watch-Tower pronounced itself in sympathy with the complaint of the second dramatist, H. C. Merivale, that "there is something depressing in the 'feeling that as literary men they [the dramatists] will be neither criticised nor read.'" However, the Tower did point out that "a very minimum of intellectual enjoyment" could be gotten from the efforts of many British dramatists.

In the same month another problem arose to vex the dramatists and other interested parties. This controversy centered upon the definition of "new" and "original" plays. The Theatre was partially

responsible for the airing of this conflict, when it announced that the suit brought against it by Robert Reece had "ended in a manner satisfactory to both sides." Reece had taken action because in 1877 The Theatre had reprinted some paragraphs from the Manchester Guardian to the effect that Reece and his partner had produced a play, Hester Gray, which suspiciously resembled one called Ruth Oakley. The authors of Hester Gray had described their play as "'new'" and as having been written for a certain actress. Reece and his partner had replied "in a letter to a contemporary" that they had not seen Ruth Oakley, but that they had "'directly founded'" their piece upon a French play; they stressed that suppression of this information had not been their desire. The Theatre thereupon raised the question of the propriety of characterizing any play based upon another as "'new and written expressly for' a particular actor and actress." Moreover, The Theatre had questioned the use of the term "original" with reference to adaptations.

In the course of the trial, the Watch-Tower tells us, Reece called three witnesses--Palgrave Simpson, Tom Taylor, and John Hollingshead--who all testified that in theatrical parlance, a "new" play was one given for the first time in England "in a novel form." Reece himself admitted in cross-examination that "he had never described, and never would describe, an adaptation from the French as a 'new' play." Watch-Tower assured its readers that had it been necessary, an impressive battery of witnesses would have been prepared to state that "in their opinion the custom of styling unacknowledged adaptations 'new' was honoured more in the breach than the observance."

The Watch-Tower stated that it was morally indefensible to withhold the fact that a play was an adaptation and to term it "new."

While this had been countenanced "down to a very recent period," the Tower thought it could not and should not be accepted any longer.

> No dramatist who respects himself and his vocation would turn to practical account the plot and characters of another piece, style the result a "new" work and yet conceal the importance of his obligation, and on the secret being discovered avail himself of the plea that the word "original" is not to be found in the program.
>
> (March, 1879, 77)

Moreover, it was doubtful whether the general public understood the specialized meanings of the terms "new" and "original" as used by theatre people. In closing, Watch-Tower asserted that throughout it had been motivated solely by the wish "to relieve the English drama from the reproach which a long course of unavowed indebtedness to foreign plays has brought upon it."

The Round Table in the following number ran a symposium on the subject of "new" and "original" plays. The Theatre must have been gratified to discover that three symposium members--Henry J. Byron, W. S. Gilbert, and Moy Thomas--were in agreement that the specialized meaning of "new" should not be used for a number of moral reasons. But one symposium member, F. C. Burnand, showed a tendency to equivocate.

> "New" used without qualification, as applied to a novel, play, or a picture, should, strictly speaking, mean something that has had no being previous to the present production. . . . "A new play by Mr. Threestars" does not necessarily imply originality as well as novelty. A manager may announce 'a new play' by me, the new play being an adaptation. But when I announce it myself, I should add to "new play" the information that it was an adaptation. I do not see that I am under any moral obligation to do so, as long as 'new' does not carry with it the meaning of original.
>
> (April, 1879, 159-160)

In May, Clement Scott, writing under the pseudonym of "Saville Rowe," lashed back at what he was pleased to call his "schoolmaster critics." With characteristic vigor, Scott fairly bristled with indignation at the participants of last month's symposium. Although he had not been specifically accused of being dishonest or immoral, Scott made it most apparent that he thought he had been impugned. Scott clearly stated his case as follows:

> But so long as the English language remains as it presents itself to my limited comprehension I shall consider a play to be "new" that has not been presented to the public before in that form, and I shall refuse to consider myself a "dishonest man" or an "an impostor" for holding to my opinion. (May, 1879, 228)

The whole controversy clearly rested upon various definitions of the word new. It was highly unlikely that the matter would be satisfactorily settled until everyone could find agreement on one definition. As for the public, it must have been sorely puzzled by some of the unusual meanings given to the word new.

In August, two months later, the playwright, Herman C. Merivale, neatly tied the two controversies together, thus directing the discussion back to the first problem. Merivale rather bitterly assailed the English craze for everything French, "simply because it is French." It was this love of everything Gallic that was the cause of the lack of original dramatists as well as of "the quaint misuse of the word 'original,' in dramatic matters." For the current "Gallomania" Merivale declared the critics to be responsible.

> If the critics as a body would frankly discourage adaptation, on the simple principle that French fare is not the best for English palates, I believe

> we should soon have plenty of original English plays.
>
> (August, 1879, 13)

However, Merivale's idea of originality referred not to subject matter, "probably the lowest originality of all," but to the way in which the subject was treated. He thought the critics should base their judgement of a piece by his standard of originality. As it was, this was the dramatists' predicament:

> The playwright wants materials as much as any man, gathered no matter where; and it is the result of his being expected to make bricks without straw, if he is to be credited with "originality," that our so-called original plays are usually so thin as to enhance the value of adaptation from the French.
>
> (August, 1879, 13)

Despite Merivale's ingenious explanation, he seems to have overlooked one point: by any standard of originality, the French playwrights could conceivably outstrip their English rivals.[13]

Two other dramatists stepped forward to air their grievances. Robert Reece complained of what he considered insolent and shabby treatment accorded by managers, actors and actresses, and other members of the theatre staff. He was heartily seconded by J. Palgrave Simpson in a later article.[14]

And Sydney Grundy came forward in December, 1879, to liven things up with his favorite contention that "there is a dramatic Ring

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[13]The statements of the Watch-Tower in the March, 1879, issue are suggestive. See p. 74.

[14]The Theatre, August, 1879, pp. 14-16; also October, 1879, pp. 135-137; November, 1879, pp. 207-210.

for all that--a ring set round with spikes--which has its centre in the cowardice of English managers, and which is none the less effectual although not organized." According to Grundy, the manager had only to cast off timidity "to avail himself of the wealth of dramatic genius which lies outside the Ring." (December, 1879, 273-277)

The dearth of dramatists was recontemplated in the January, 1880, number. Henry Irving, Ernest A. Bendall, and Henry Neville declared that there was a dearth of dramatists. Palgrave Simpson believed that there was no lack of playwrights, but was in accord with Irving and Bendall that the would-be dramatist must have a knowledge of stage technique and must write plays which were acceptable. Moy Thomas, a critic, raised the old contention that better financial returns would stimulate dramatic "genius," whereas Neville, a manager, thought that more collaboration might be the solution to the problem. Last, F. C. Burnand again placed the blame squarely upon managerial preference for French adaptations. (January, 1880, 1-11)

Grundy was still obsessed with the idea of a "Dramatic Ring" in 1883. The November Omnibus-Box roundly reproved the playwright for his "cantankerousness," in attributing his lack of success to the existence of the Ring. (November, 1883, 268-270) And George R. Sims in an autobiographical sketch in the July, 1884, issue had this to say about the ring.

> We hear a good deal nowadays of the dramatic ring and the jealousy of authors. . . . The first letters of congratulation to reach me on the success of the "Lights o' London," and the heartiest, were from two of the Busy B's--two of the giant members of the ring--men I had never spoken to or met: Henry J. Byron and F. C. Burnand.
>
> (July, 1884, 16)

In 1890 the plight of the aspiring dramatist and tha lack of native talent were still occupying the minds of the writers in the magazine. S. J. Adair Fitz-Gerald concluded an article in June on this wistful note: "Let all fees be abolished and all programmes offered without charge, and then if we could get a few original plays by British authors, well--then the dramatic millennium would be at hand!" (June, 1890, 309)

In October, 1891, the same Fitz-Gerald maintained that the matiness production was "the hope, and the only hope, of the aspiring and unknown dramatist." The article pointed out that the matinee was a very recent development, and that the critics seemed to regard them with "despair." But Fitz-Gerald pointed out that some--indeed the majority--of the unknown playwrights could not afford to pay the hundred pounds or so necessary for the production of their pieces. He closed with an appeal for some suggestion to ease the monetary predicament of the unknowns. (October, 1891, 157-160)

The December, 1892, number told of still another attempt to solve the problem--the formation of the Society of British Dramatic Art, offering "new actors, new plays, and a new and original method of bringing them to . . . notice." The author of the article cautioned the members of the society not to be too "ambitious" or "confident" at the first.[15] (December, 1892, 245-250)

The managers of 1894 were subjected to another careful scrutiny regarding their choice of plays. W. A. Lewis Bettany came to the con-

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[15]This Society came "to an untimely end," according to an article in the May, 1897, issue. See p. 269.

clusion in his article that the managers were essentially conservative in their choice, with amusement the main basis of their selection. However, Bettany thought the situation "not altogether discouraging." Some managers were pursuing a policy "directly beneficial to dramatic art," whereas the others were "harmlessly inactive." And when the public begins to show an interest in "really public affairs" the managers will cater to their tastes, Bettany concluded. (April, 1894, 182-190)

In September, 1895, the critic Malcolm Watson, was busy complaining that the past season had shown an "obvious" lack of originality. The dramatists were accused of "having allowed themselves to run in grooves already well worn without seeking to carry their efforts further afield." He contended that the playwrights had occupied themselves far too long with the "Woman of the Past." (September, 1895, 134-137)

But in October, 1895, Arthur à Beckett tells us that "playwriting has become one of the most lucrative kinds of literary work"--that is if the play is a success.[16] However, the playwright still has the discourtesies of the managers to endure. It is gratifying to see that in one respect at least the dramatist was making headway, and that at long last there seemed to be financial inducement enough to inspire his "genius."

However, in 1897, some of the old outcries were raised again. In February, Robert Buchanan, a dramatist, protested that "the self-constituted judges of the modern Drama reproach that popular form of

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[16]See also The Theatre, August, 1896, 66-70. This article also points out that the second-rate dramatic author has been squeezed out almost altogether, largely due to the decline of stock companies.

Art with its inferiority to the masterpieces of contemporary fiction." (February, 1897, 68-70). In April, 1897, the managers were once again attacked for their timidity in giving new authors a chance. Moreover, the managers neglected that segment of the theatre-going public which is "more cultured" and more intellectual, said the article.

> All that those for whom I plead want is the chance of seeing what the writers of the day could produce in the way of plays if given a fairly free hand and encouraged to do their best. At present the ring of dramatists is far too small to give the drama a chance.
>
> (April, 1897, 209)

Last, in July, 1897, we find Edward Morton, a critic, decrying the "French invasion."

> At half-a-dozen theatres English translations, adaptations, versions, or perversions of French plays are now being performed, to say nothing of the French comedians in possession of the Adelphi and the Lyric.
>
> (July, 1897, 27)

Thus we see that not only were the mid-Victorian critics concerned about the calibre of the native English drama, but that the late-Victorian writers were also much concerned.

Minor Themes

Our chapter should be concluded with a brief mention of three other subjects which were frequently treated in The Theatre. Since it would be utterly false to give the impression that the actor and his conduct on and off the stage were not criticized, it should be said that the players were often reminded of their faults. Among other things,

the actors were assailed for their slovenly diction;[17] their inability to read lines;[18] their inept stage swordsmanship;[19] their fondness for taking curtain calls;[20] their penchant for self-advertisement;[21] and their failure to spend their leisure time in self-improvement.[22]

Another subject which was popular with The Theatre was the annual Christmas pantomime. The Theatre indicated its interest in pantomime not only by giving reviews of the pantomime performances, but also by running at least one feature article every year on this topic. The two major approaches in the articles were: the origin of pantomime and the departure of the current pantomime from its traditional patterns. In connection with the latter, the insertion of music-hall elements was highly resented by the writers of the magazine. A protest by Charles Dickens, son of the famous novelist, in the January, 1896, number is quite typical:

> And then came the deluge. The floodgates of the music halls were opened, and all that was agreeable about the "grand comic Christmas pantomime" was promptly and effectually drowned out. Then followed a period, out of which we have not fully emerged, of hopeless, inane, and offensive vulgarity all over the country--a vulgarity which . . . has been a most popular kind, and highly remunerative to performers and managers alike.
>
> (January, 1896, 24)

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[17]The Theatre, February, 1889, pp. 93-94; September, 1892, pp. 97-103.

[18]The Theatre, August, 1895, pp. 85-87.

[19]The Theatre, December, 1880, pp. 347-350; June, 1896, pp. 321-328.

[20]The Theatre, October, 1895, pp. 193-195.

[21]The Theatre, October, 1895, p. 195; September, 1896, pp. 140-143.

[22]The Theatre, September, 1887, pp. 133-139; April, 1897, pp. 210-213.

The third subject which should be mentioned is The Theatre's series of articles either appraising the past theatrical season or assessing the current theatrical season. A sampling of their titles will best indicate their nature and scope: "The Stage, Past and Present" (April, 1882); "'Good-bye to the Season'" (August, 1891); "Our Stage Today" (September, 1894); "The Past Year" (January, 1896).

This chapter has attempted to give a descriptive analysis of four major issues confronting the late Victorian theatre. These issues have concerned aspects of the audience, the merits of a National Theatre, the worth of a Dramatic Academy, and problems in playwriting. Three minor themes have also been discussed briefly.

CHAPTER III

THE STAGE AND FOUR SOCIAL FORCES

As the previous chapter has shown, the late Victorian stage regarded itself as a part of the society in which it existed. Since the theatre did not exist in a vacuum, it influenced and was affected by other social forces and institutions. The relations of four such potent agencies--the Church, Government Censorship, the Press, and Society itself--and the Stage, will be studied, described, and evaluated in this chapter, each in a separate section. This analysis is to supplement the material in the previous chapter and to help round out the picture of the late Victorian stage as depicted in The Theatre magazine.

The Church

An awareness of the potent attitude of the Church toward the Stage is readily apparent from the beginning of The Theatre to its demise in 1897.

The Watch-Tower of November, 1878, hailed with considerable joy the cognizance the recent Sheffield Church Congress had taken of the theatre and the music-hall. In a paper at the Congress read by a Reverend Charles Bullock on "The Attitude of the Church to Literature and Education," there had been a "very prominent" mention of the theatre. According to the Watch-Tower, the mere fact that the drama had been discussed at all was noteworthy. The churchmen had admitted,

"grudgingly perhaps," that the drama might have moral value and "that a theatre-lover may indulge his taste without backsliding beyond all hope of recovery." While some of the discussion at the Congress had displayed the customarily prejudiced attitude toward the Stage--based upon a "plentiful lack of actual acquaintance"--still the Stage had found some defenders, chief of whom was the Bishop of Manchaster. The Tower commented as follows:

> Still, with all allowances made, it is much to have the subject treated on an occasion like this with such comparative fairness; and many of the views authoritatively expressed at the Sheffield Congress . . . mark something like a new departure which is sure to lead before long to very important results. . . . (November, 1878, 256)

The Watch-Tower of July, 1879, criticized rather severely a Monsignor Capel of the Catholic Church because of a "confused and dishonest opinion" he had expressed at a recent banquet. According to the Tower, the Monsignor had spoken of "'that band of noble men and noble women who came to express the highest perfection of that art in which he in his position was not allowed to participate.'" The Monsignor had regretted that he could not see the French players and envied those who could. The Tower's reaction to Capel's remarks was decidedly acrimonious:

> For the lack of consistency in this singular attitude towards the stage a public teacher of wide and deep influence is certainly to be pitied, nor can he wholly escape blame. He is evidently conscious that the Church has discovered its invectives against the stage to be baseless. . . . But notwithstanding a change of attitude rendered necessary by the growth of intelligent toleration, the abandonment of antiquated prejudice cannot be accomplished in a moment and with a single effort of will. The stage must not be attacked wholesale; . . . But . . . it must be implied that the theatre is after all not the place for professedly religious people. (July, 1879, 347)

Considering the attitude of other church groups toward the theatre, it would seem that the Tower was rather harsh in its criticism of the Monsignor. Also, the Monsignor may have been forbidden by his superiors to attend the theatre, whatever his personal desires might have been.[1]

The October, 1879, Watch-Tower noted that relations between the Stage and the Church had taken a decided step backward. The recent visit of the Comédie Française had furnished the Church with an excuse to attack the theatre as an institution, on the grounds that certain of the French plays had been "vicious" and that some of the players were immoral. "Blatant nonsense of this kind," said the Tower, "can only be written by those who do not know what the theatre really is. . . ." However, the Tower continued, it could scarcely regard "with philosophical indifference" the defections and hesitations of "recently-won allies" from the Church. Thereupon the Tower affirmed that the most popular of the French plays had been "perfectly innocent in character." The popularity of these performances, moreover, had merely "illustrated the readiness with which fashionable society follows its leaders like a flock of sheep."

The Tower also looked with a decidedly jaundiced eye upon the recently formed organization called The Church and Stage Guild. According to the Tower, the activities of the Guild had only provided "an unsympathetic public with some subject for a hearty laugh" almost

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[1]The remarks of F. C. Burnand in The Theatre, January, 1889, p. 19, are significant. Says Burnand: "A Roman Catholic priest cannot visit a theatre within his own diocese. . . . I have never heard of one case of an English Catholic priest being permitted to assist as a spectator at any theatre in England."

every month. With withering sarcasm The Theatre writer commented on one such meeting.

> Nothing, for instance, would have been better in its way than the boldness of the arrangement by which an important member of the Gaiety company, who had hitherto generally succeeded in keeping her name out of the programme of that theatre, was put up to discuss the conduct of "noblemen, men of high position, and soldiers, who stand at the stage doors to tempt girls who are perfectly innocent." . . . Happier still, because more delicate and subtle, was the instinct which prompted the fair, but unknown speaker, to lighten the gloom of her subject by such a touch as the suggestion of a fire-hose, to be directed at the heads of these aristocratic Lotharios.
>
> (December, 1879, 246)

The mischief of such an organization, according to The Theatre, lay in the admission of the actors that "they find it necessary to make public profession of the faith which is held by the rest of the community." Other "arts and professions" do not find this type of union necessary, observed The Tower.

It is instructive, too, to observe the attitude of The Theatre contributors toward the representation of religious and Biblical subjects on the stage. The first hint of this attitude came in an article in the May, 1879, issue reporting the performance of a Passion Play at the San Francisco Opera House. News of this event, said the Tower, read "like a message from another world." Other Passion plays had in the past been presented only before "rude and unlettered" audiences, and so the effect of such a play "in the midst of a civilized community" had hitherto not been gauged. The San Francisco audience, it was reported, had received the production in a fittingly grave manner.

However, The Tower hoped that here in London, Mr. Hollingshead, "actuated by religious fervour and a desire to put money in his purse,"

would not undertake such an experiment for a number of reasons. The Tower could see no possible good that such a production could do.

> The cause of religious progress does not stand in need of assistance from the stage. In all probability, too, that cause would be materially retarded by the introduction of Passion Plays. The spirit of scepticism is abroad, and such performances would often inspire irreverent mirth rather than graver sentiments. . . . The devout would regard a Miracle play as a profanation. . . . (May, 1879, 216)

Furthermore, such a production would be expensive, and would not pay for itself, as had already been demonstrated in the San Francisco venture. Clearly, the Tower, too, could be cynical on occasion. The rather patronising attitude taken by the Tower toward mysteries and miracles is reflected throughout The Theatre magazine. There is scarcely an article devoted to the Medieval theatre in all the twenty years of the magazine's existence. This is in marked contrast with the welter of articles on the French theatre and on Shakespeariana.

A brief notation in the En Passant column of the June, 1879, issue reported that the reaction in San Francisco among "religious people of every denomination" had been such that the manager had been requested to "suppress the sacrilege." As a result of the manager's refusal, the man who had impersonated Christ had been fined "forty dollars and costs" by a court of law.

In England the use of Biblical subjects was expressly banned by the Lord Chamberlain's office. This edict affected both the drama and opera. In this connection Our Omnibus-Box of November, 1881, relating that the Italian actor, Salvini, was planning to tour England and America with a play called Moses, remarked that the production of Moses would probably not be permitted in London. Late nineteenth

century tastes are perhaps reflected in the Box's statement that in Salvini's production "all the supernatural element is skilfully eliminated." However, even then, the Box was dubious as to whether the piece would be accepted by "a Bible-loving community."

> Aaron is represented as a man of science, who plays upon the credulity of his brother Moses, so that when the latter strikes the rock, he has been told to do so by Aaron, who is well aware, being a distinguished geologist, that the spring is close to the surface, and only requires a little hole to be made by the rod to leap forth.
>
> (November, 1881, 311)

In 1882, Our Musical-Box printed excerpts from the comments of a German essayist, Lindau, on a production of Parsifal given at Bayreuth. Describing Parsifal as giving at one point in the opera "'a faithful impersonation of the Redeemer, as usually represented to us by the pictorial art,'" Lindau said that many people thought this "'revolting.'" Our Musical-Box quoted Lindau in the following passage.

> "The modern stage is essentially profane, and now that plays have passed out of ecclesiastical hands into secular ones, offers a striking contrast to its mother the Church. Incidents and persons appertaining to the House of God should not be exhibited on the theatrical boards. Even the Berlin Chief of Police is of this opinion, for he has lately prohibited the display of Biblical figures in the wax-work shows. . . ."
>
> (September, 1882, 176-177)

If we may trust Lindau, many people were of the opinion that the ecclesiastical and the secular should be punctiliously separated.

However, Beatty-Kingston, the writer of the Music-Box column at this time, thought it most unfortunate that the British audiences were being deprived of certain operas based upon Biblical themes. In Beatty-Kingston's words:

> I have never been able, as yet, to understand why, in every Christian country but our own, the fact that an operatic plot has been culled from a chapter of Biblical history . . . should by no means invalidate its moral fitness for performance on the stage, whilst it has that effect in England. . . . Is it because we are better, or worse, Christians than the Germans, Frenchmen, Italians . . . that we may not see and hear a Scriptural opera without prejudice to our eternal salvation?
>
> (August, 1882, 342)

However, an account of the unfortunate experience of an American stage favorite, Lotta, reveals convincingly that some of the British public did not share Beatty-Kingston's views even two years later. In the performance of Musette, reported Our Play-Box, the hapless Lotta had sung "The Sweet By-and-By" "with all the innocence in the world." At this point pandemonium had broken loose.

> For the moment, all courtesy to a stranger and all consideration for a woman were forgotten; and with the fear of Moody, Sankey, and General Booth before their eyes, the righteous audience howled at Lotta, and punched one another's heads in the gallery with truly Christian resignation. . . . Half the people were fretting and fuming about the luckless hymn-tune, and the rest were blackening one another's eyes in the name of religion.
>
> (February, 1884, 84)

By February, 1888, however, Wilson Barrett and George R. Sims had daringly used a clergyman as the hero of their new play and had gotten away with it, largely due to their "discretion and tact."[2] This apparently paved the way for such later productions as Jones' two

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[2]See The Theatre, February, 1888, pp. 85-88, for a full review of the play.

plays, Judah[3] and Michael and His Lost Angel, and for the pseudo-Biblical Sign of the Cross by Wilson Barrett.[4]

If we may judge from the nature of the articles in The Theatre, the relations between the Church and the Stage fluctuated to a great extent. In 1882, for instance, Martin F. Tupper was inclined to be optimistic. He asserted that the moral tone of the theatre of the day had been elevated from that of the very recent past, and that many of the players were "most exemplary, not only in morals, but also in religion." This promising state of affairs prompted Tupper to express his conviction that "the pulpit is glad to welcome a coadjutor of good morals and pure religion even in the once despised and long-neglected stage." (April, 1882, 216-217)

Yet, three years later, in a strongly worded paper Frank Marshall--the fact that he was the husband of the well known actress, Ada Cavendish, may have contributed to his vehemence--denounced the churchly detractors of the Stage. Singled out for specific censure were The Bishop of London and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Anglicans, and Cardinal Manning, a Catholic. The Bishop had condemned the ballet for its

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[3]The Omnibus-Box of September, 1890, reported that the clergy had been invited to see the performance of Judah. The main character is a minister who yielded to temptation and lied about it on oath. The acceptance of this by a "church-going public" and by the clergy itself "speaks volumes alike for the catholic spirit of the clergy, and the earnest tendency of the higher forms of drama," commented the Box. See pages 148-149.

[4]Reactions toward Sign of the Cross seem to have been mixed. Watch-Tower of December, 1895, reported that some thought a religious subject had been too familiarly treated. However, the January, 1896, number reported that a minister had recommended the play highly. See pp. 58-59.

"impure" effects upon the young and had been quoted in a London paper as having "'condemned the stage altogether.'" To all these "professors of righteousness" Marshall had this firm rejoinder:

> It is a great mistake to pretend that the members of the dramatic profession are any better than their neighbours; but we maintain most strongly that they are not any worse. . . . Nor does the stage ask of the church to be patronised or patted on the back. . . . All that the stage asks of the Church is, to treat it with common fairness and what should be charity.
>
> (November, 1885, 240)

The "strange case" of the ballet girl who had entered a convent, reported by the Omnibus-Box in 1887, seems to support Marshall in many of his statements. The ballet girl had had some difficulty in gaining acceptance to a convent due to prejudice against the stage. Apparently a minor furor had been raised before the incident was settled. The Omnibus-Box commented that indeed there were good and bad ballet girls, but warned "that it would be worse than folly on that account to argue . . . that the calling of the stage is innocuous, or that the profession of the ballet is free from danger." (October, 1887, 224)

Lewis Carroll--addressing the reader as "a man who recognises . . . that there is a distinction between good and evil,"--meted out both praise and blame to the stage in its treatment of good and evil. Defining the "good" as all that is "brave, and manly, and true, in human nature," Carroll pronounced the Stage on a par with fictional literature and " distinctly higher" than Society, in its treatment of vice. Even in the handling of religious subjects, Carroll thought the worst instances of mistreatment to be found not on the Stage, but in "fashionable Society and popular Literature." Said Carroll, "I have heard, from the lips of clergymen, anecdotes whose horrid blasphemy

outdid anything that would be even possible on the Stage." Though Carroll thought the Stage suitably reverential in its treatment of acts of prayer and places of worship, yet he declared it to be sometimes remiss in its treatment of oaths, ministers, and evil spirits. Carroll objected to anything pertaining to these treated in a jesting manner. Thus, Carroll found fault with W. S. Gilbert for his penchant for "making bishops and clergymen contemptible." He closed with a reference to the "distinctly dramatic tone of much of the language of the Bible." (June, 1888, 285-294)

What was termed a "notable date in theatrical annals" was described in Our Omnibus-Box of November, 1889. On October 2, 1889, an actor, Edward Terry, had read a paper on "The Amusements of the People," at the invitation of the Cardiff Church Congress. The Box was almost rapturous in its praise of Terry.

> The substance of the delivery was admirable; it was concise, the arguments in support of the drama were well chosen and forcible, and the author pointed out how uncharitable it really was for those who had never entered the playhouse, frequently to condemn an institution of the bearings of which they were totally ignorant; whereas, were the clergy more usually to attend, "their very presence might ensure propriety from the respect due to their cloth." (November, 1889, 271)

Yet another church conference, this time one at Grindenwald, gave its consideration to the subject of the relations between the Stage and the Church. This was reported in Echoes from the Green Room in the September number, with the comment that though actors were no better--and no worse--than other people, yet their offences received more attention than those of others. (September, 1894, 147-148)

Still another bit of evidence, adduced to show the improved relationship between the two antagonists, was uncovered by T. Edgar Pemberton in the November, 1894, Round Table. Pemberton revealed that the portraits of the famous acting family, the Kembles, were now hanging in the Deanery at Hereford. This link between the Church and the Stage had been forged by the marriage of the Dean and the daughter of Fanny Kemble.

By June, 1897, The Watch-Tower could make this gratifying statement:

> Within living memory, however, a change . . . has become apparent. The Church acknowledges the influence of the Drama, and many of the clergy, prelates not excepted, are to be found among the audiences at theatres in which intellectual entertainments are provided.
>
> (June, 1897, 308)

The Tower cited the invitation issued to Sir Henry Irving, a stage luminary, to recite Tennyson's Becket "in the chapter-house of Canterbury Cathedral, almost at the very spot where, according to tradition, the sturdy and high-minded Archbishop met his death," as a "memorable fact."[5] Also lauded was the Archdeacon of London, who had spoken before a group gathered at the Criterion Theatre to discuss benefits for actors' orphans. Concluded the Tower happily, "Whatever its shortcomings may be, the Drama must always be a potent factor in our life and thought, and Archdeacon Sinclair, a prominent representative of the clergy, is alive to its importance, its responsibilities, and its aspirations."

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[5]Irving is given the major credit for helping to bring about a rapprochement between Church and Stage. See The Theatre, July, 1897, pp. 14-17, for a full description of Becket as read by Irving.

Even the hitherto recalcitrant Nonconformist was beginning to look upon the stage with more friendliness by 1897. Commented Alfred Halstead in the August number:

> The modern Nonconformist has come to see that there are plenty of decent, wholesome plays on the stage today, as well as plays which are neither the one nor the other. He is beginning to recognise it as a duty to help make the former successful, and severely to boycott the others.
> (August, 1897, 80)

Other evidences of better relations between Church and Stage in the year 1897 include: the Dean of Canterbury's approval given to a playwright to dramatize a play in which Nero was the chief character;[6] the Reverend Canon Thompson's toast to Henry Irving in which Irving was described as "a real and living force in the community";[7] a performance at Canterbury of the Reverend Henry Cresswell's Conversion of England, in which both clergymen and laymen had taken part.[8]

It is abundantly clear that the years between 1878 and 1897 had witnessed a betterment of the relations between the Church and the Stage. In The Theatre a careful record of this gradual change in attitude has been faithfully set down.

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[6]The Theatre, August, 1897, p. 109.

[7]The Theatre, November, 1897, 268-269.

[8]The Theatre, December, 1897, p. 334.

Government Censorship

The history of the Lord Chamberlain's relationship with the stage dates back to a Parliamentary Act of 1737, which firmly established the Chamberlain's right to censor stage plays. Thenceforth any person contemplating the production of a play was required to submit a "'true'" copy of his play to the office of the Chamberlain.[9] Persons disobeying this edict were to be fined the sum of fifty pounds. (December, 1889, 279-280)

The attitude of the writers of The Theatre toward the dramatic censor, known as the Examiner of Plays, shows considerable variation through the years. The Watch-Tower of November, 1878, began by commenting that it was "inevitable" that the censor should be subject to "violent attacks, both as regards its principle and its practical working." The most recent complaint against the censor had come from a dramatist, Matthison, whose adaptation of a French Play had been banned by the Examiner of Plays, E. F. S. Pigott. The Tower made it apparent that it was fully aware of the underlying problems involved in censorship

> . . . Especially is it natural that the weak point of the censorship should be considered by those who disapprove of it to lie in its inconsistent operation. To discuss the principle of the censor's decisions would obviously be mere waste of breath. He is the one judge from whom there is no appeal, and who may allow himself to be swayed by the caprice of the

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[9]An Act for Regulating Theatres was passed in 1843. This empowered the Lord Chamberlain to license theatres, provided that the theatres could meet the requirements of the London County Council with respect to "structural fitness." See The Theatre, January, 1895, pp. 13-14.

> moment. He deals moreover with subjects of dispute which are so impalpable as to be almost beyond actual proof either one way or the other. He is a sort of mouthpiece of public opinion, and his chief difficulty lies in determining what tune it is that public opinion wishes him to play.
>
> (November, 1878, 260)

Returning to the play which had inspired the most recent controversy, the Tower gave the disappointed author a dubious measure of comfort with a comment that the play "might without danger to the morals of the public have been represented on the stage, more especially as it would probably have had but a short career during which to do any harm." Nevertheless, the Tower upheld the Examiner, maintaining that the censor's decision had been consistent with those he had previously rendered. The Tower made its true feelings about censorship known, however, when it commented that it would take more than this small furor "to blow away the abuses and the absurdities of our present system of dramatic censorship."

The Tower seems to have had a change of heart about the value of censorship, for in December, 1878, it made this statement:

> Grant for a moment that Mr. Pigott and his predecessor . . . have, like other Government clerks, made their mistakes, and that Lord Hertford's is not the best intellect that could be chosen for the determination of questions of taste and morality; . . . grant all this, and even then it may still be that the censorship does more good than harm, and that this particular censor is upon the whole more often right than wrong in his conscientious decisions.
>
> (December, 1878, 334)

On this occasion, too, the Tower upheld the censor's decision against the assaults of another resentful dramatist, Sydney Grundy. Furthermore, the Tower thought it possible that English drama would benefit from the activities of the Examiner, inasmuch as the "clever young

playwrights like Mr. Grundy" might then try their hand at original work rather than spend their time on "nasty or risky French originals."

Grundy himself stepped forward in the following March to state his own case. He pointed out that when a play was banned, the author had no right to appeal the judgement, nor was he told wherein he had offended. In Grundy's opinion the whole system of censorship was conducive to the improper exercise of "absolute power." Next, he asserted that it was difficult to judge a play by its script. "The tendency of a book or an article can very clearly be perceived in its manuscript form, but it is not at all easy even for experts to judge of the precise effect of a play until it is presented upon the stage." Furthermore, he conceded that abolishing censorship might permit the production of some "works of a mischievous character." Notwithstanding, Grundy thought that it would be better to put up with this condition in lieu of suppressing "one innocent play." Last, Grundy believed that the drama is "a great art which must enjoy absolute freedom." Grundy seems to have made out an excellent case for himself and his fellow dramatists.

The matter of censorship was dropped until November, 1889, when there appeared an eloquent plea for the abolition of censorship from William Henry Hudson. Like Grundy, Hudson thought that the system had led to numerous abuses and irregularities. Additionally, he argued, the drama is the only one of the arts subject to the censor. Besides, censorship had not eradicated that for which it had been established.

> The Censorship has proved itself powerless to guard from outrage the finely-strung sensitiveness of the

> British matron, or to insure Mrs. Grundy's feelings against occasional shock.
>
> (December, 1889, 282)

All these considerations led Hudson to conclude as follows:

> Our stage literature must remain handicapped so long as we are content to tolerate what Mr. Buchanan has so well called "a special providence salaried by the State," nor will it ever take its proper place or exercise its fullest influence until the official Censorship has been replaced by the truer Censorship of public and a free Press.
>
> (December, 1889, 283)

The other side of the question was placed before the readers by Arthur Goodrich in May, 1892. Unlike Hudson, Goodrich had little confidence in the ability of the general public to act as its own censor. Goodrich displayed his own basic conservatism when he expressed the opinion that at best "a present safeguard" would be exchanged for something "merely speculative and theoretic." In addition the writer predicted that upon the removal of censorship, there would be nothing to prevent the managers from catering to the demands for "immoral plays." That there would be demands Goodrich was certain. Moreover, there was further danger that young people would be corrupted, "for prurient curiosity is unhappily a characteristic of the young." Goodrich's idea of the immoral play proves to be less <u>risqué</u> farce than the Ibsen-ish problem play. Said Goodrich:

> In giving us plays, these people would say, "You must not slur over the nasty spots of our social life because such realism might, by the community at large, be considered repulsive. How can it be repulsive when it is true?"
>
> (May, 1892, 234)

And again he made his antagonism toward the new drama crystal clear when he stated, "There is, surely, a great difference between the <u>double</u>

entendres of farcical comedy and immorality made attractive and excusable by example, insidious argument, and specious logic." These fears led Goodrich to come to a conclusion remarkable for its invalidity.

> . . . A drama which would hold up to scorn all those links and ties which bind society together proves the necessity for some supervision. The Licenser might refuse a license to a comparatively harmless play, but a bad Lord Chamberlain is better than no Lord Chamberlain, just as a bad magistrate is better than Anarchy.
> (May, 1892, 237)

The Lord Chamberlain and his faction came into their own, however, in January, 1895. As Charles Dickens oberved with some dryness:

> It is not very often that all the theatrical managers in London are found to be of absolutely one mind about anything, and the unanimity with which they have recently avowed their desire to be regulated by the Lord Chamberlain rather than by the London County Council comes upon us with a mild shock of surprise. With the fear of that terrible Licensing Committee in Spring Gardens before their eyes, they cling to the officials of St. James's Palace with a tenacious affection which is almost touching.
> (January, 1895, 10-11)

Abandoning his facetiousness, Dickens commented that this state of affairs was evidence of the "tact and discretion" with which the present Lord Chamberlain had performed his duties. The amicable relations between the theatres and the Chamberlain were but a recent manifestation. According to Dickens, the present Chamberlain now interfered only "rarely" with the theatres once they had been licensed.[10] However, the

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[10]A manager, John Hollingshead, expressed dissatisfaction with the entire licensing system in 1897. "Our licensing laws are only fit to govern the entertainments . . . of African savages." See The Theatre, September, 1895, p. 139.

Examiner of Plays was still active. Dickens cited the confusion existing over the length of the tenure held by the Examiner as proof of the "loose way in which so many Acts of Parliament are drawn." No one seemed to know whether the Examiner retained his office "for life, or for the life of the Sovereign, or only during the good will and pleasure of the Lord Chamberlain." (January, 1895, 14) The previously reviled Examiner, Pigott, received an appreciative tribute for a change.

> . . . It may be said that he has been guided by common-sense principles, and has acted with a candid and open mind, and has taken a broader view of his duties and a greater sense of his responsibility to dramatic art than ever obtained before.
>
> (January, 1895, 15)

The late manifestations of affection for the Chamberlain's office were motivated by managerial fears of finding themselves under the less tender mercy of the London County Council. Managers had had unpleasant indications of just what the supervision of the London County Council entailed, if the word of an anonymous manager can be taken. Stated the manager, "Unhappily, however, it seems to be a part of the policy of the London County Council to be discourteous in manner to the managers of theatres." (September, 1894, 106) Furthermore, there was much resentment against the Council's persistent habit of lumping the music halls and the theatres together and treating them as a unit. The Watch-Tower was highly indignant over this and also over the make-up of the Council itself which it described unflatteringly as "a prejudiced and narrow-minded clique of faddists, puritans, and 'labour leaders,' desperately anxious that nobody but themselves shall ever have an opportunity of posing as friends of the 'unemployed.'"

(December, 1894, 279)

The evidence that the menace of the London County Council was keenly felt lies in a second article by Dickens in the March number. Alluding to the attempts of the "Progressist members of the County Council" to gain supervisory control over the theatres, Dickens urged the readers to keep the issue in mind during the coming elections in March.

> . . . It is most desirable that the very real danger of the situation should be steadily kept before the eyes of all such voters as are directly or indirectly interested in the well-being of the stage. It is not too much to say that the votes of the very large class which comes under this category would almost turn the scale where the electors are, as to other matters, fairly well balanced, and we shall be greatly to blame if we do not make our power thoroughly felt at the polls.
>
> (March, 1895, 140)

After retelling the grievances of the managers against the Council, Dickens stated unequivocally that the real intent of the Progressist party was to destroy the theatres altogether. "If the Progressist party wins, the attack on the stage is certain to be continued, and in all probability with success."

In February the recently lauded Pigott, the Examiner of Plays, died, a fact which was reported in the April issue. The Watch-Tower paid tribute to Pigott as "a man of the world." More significantly, the Tower declared that "he had never, it is believed, deprived the world, by his blindness or severity, of a dramatic masterpiece."[11]

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[11]Echoes from the Green Room also commented on Mr. Pigott as follows: "He . . . had been Examiner of Plays for just over 20 years. In that time the standard of what could safely be permitted on the stage underwent a remarkable change, and it says much for the excellent judgment of Mr. Pigott that he so easily recognised this change, and made no ill-advised or futile attempts to oppose it." April, 1895, p. 247.

Upon his death, there had been agitation for the abolishing of the office altogether. This outcry had been of brief duration, having faded rapidly for want of encouragement from the press and other potent sources. After keeping managers and playwrights on the qui vive for some time, the Lord Chamberlain announced the appointment of Mr. George Alexander Redford, a man the Tower described as "a gentleman of whom not only the general public, but the theatrical public, had never heard until his name was announced in the Press." The Daily News stated the new Examiner's qualifications to be "'his personal fitness'" plus a knowledge of his office obtained from close association with his predecessor. As the Tower saw it, bad feelings had been aroused in some circles because of the delay in selecting the new censor. There had apparently been a great number of candidates, among whom was Charles Dickens, the same who wrote for The Theatre. Either because it may have supported Dickens for the position, or for some other reason, the Tower seems to evince a strangely dubious attitude toward the whole proceeding.

> So now the whole tragi-comedy is over. . . . Had Mr. Pigott's decease been followed immediately by the announcement of Mr. Redford's succession to his post, outside candidature for the place would have been prevented. As it is, Mr. Redford is on his trial, and we have no right to assume that he will not come triumphantly out of the stern ordeal.
>
> (April, 1895, 196)

Redford found, however, that his "stern ordeal" had only begun with his tardy appointment. In May, 1896, a wrathful playwright, Robert Buchanan, launched a bitter attack upon the censor. Buchanan bitterly assailed the Examiner for banning his work because there had been--so the dramatist said--"discussion of social morality" in it. Coyly

declining to "give away the plot" of his piece, Buchanan gave vent to his feelings in these words:

> The head and front of the offending was a situation at the end of the third act, and that situation closely resembled, in everything but psychology, one licensed in the Maitre des Forges, The Ironmaster, and my own Lady Clare. A man marries a woman, and discovering, when they are alone . . . that she does not love him, informs her that they must live apart . . . until such time as she can care for him as a wife should care for her husband. . . .
>
> There is nothing very new in this situation, as I tell it, and nothing, I feel, very shocking; but it was the nuance of the thing, the hidden enormity of the thing, the foul suggestiveness of the thing, that appalled Mr. Redford!
>
> (May, 1896, 256)

What Buchanan found insupportable was the Examiner's tolerance of what the playwright called "go-as-you-please and dress-as-you-please vulgarities." Of course, this is Buchanan's side of the story. Redford, unfortunately, never explained himself--at least in The Theatre.

The December Watch-Tower of 1896 seems to give at least one of Buchanan's charges credence. In an article entitled "Nastiness on the Stage," the Tower called Mr. Redford down for passing a French adaptation which the Tower thought redolent of the "gutter." Accordingly, the Tower reminded Redford of his duties as "the guardian of public morals so far as the stage is concerned."

> Whether the circumstance is the result of ignorance or of carelessness it is none of our business to inquire. Enough that the fact remains, and inevitably suggests the moral that if Mr. Redmond does not speedily waken to a proper sense of responsibilities he may unexpectedly find them, and that at no very distant date, transferred to other and to stronger shoulders.
>
> (December, 1896, 302)

In fine, the problems of censoring plays were numerous, and reactions in The Theatre toward censorship varied considerably. One thing must have been certain--by the very nature of his duties it was patently

impossible for the censor to please everyone. As one of the articles suggested, the censor at best represented contemporary public opinion and tastes.

The Press

During the era covered by The Theatre magazine the relations between the press as represented by the dramatic critics, and the stage were marked by numerous controversies. Certain knotty questions about dramatic criticism arose early in the course of the magazine and seemed to increase in number with the years.

The Watch-Tower once commented with acute perception that "it can never be a very pleasant, and rarely perhaps a very profitable, task to criticise the critics." According to the Tower, however, "the case is of course different if the criticism be the angry retort wrung out of disappointed author or creator." (February, 1879, 4)

One such "disappointed creator" was Henry J. Byron, who accurately entitled his article "Growls from a Playwright." From Byron's point of view the critics should maintain different standards of criticism for original work and for French adaptations and translations. As Byron saw it, the argument that a given piece pleased the audience irrespective of source was "cheap" and moreover, "unworthy the consideration of an artist."

> I do not mean to argue that, because a play is not taken from a foreign source, it is of necessity to be treated tenderly. But I contend that, however cleverly a play may be adapted, it is, as an intellectual achievement, on a totally different and inferior footing to [sic] an original composition. . . . But above all, one would imagine those critics, who should lead public taste,

> would lend their powerful aid towards establishing or assisting the popularity of original work rather than grudgingly admitting the success with "the audience" whilst deploring the result; for with one or two critics anything short of a fiasco seems to be a personal grievance.
>
> (January, 1880, 21)

After dwelling at some length upon the absence of "a kindly pat or two on the back" from the critics when his latest creation had been produced, Byron declared "'first-night notices'" to be culpable for "much of the slap-dash and sweeping element in dramatic criticism."[12] Said the playwright,

> . . . When a new play is placed before the critic, with the motive, the details, and the dialogue of which he is totally unacquainted, I say it is unfair to take his necessarily hastily-formed opinion of its faults or merits as reliable or valuable, however conscientious and experienced the critic may be.
>
> (January, 1880, 23)

According to Byron the party-like atmosphere of a typical first night provided "too many distracting elements" for the critic to perform his duties satisfactorily. Accordingly, the dramatist pleaded for a second look at a piece before the writing of an evaluation. This policy, so Byron said, would inspire better original work on the part of the playwrights. Whilst declaring that "the majority of the London critics are honest," Byron yet maintained that those who themselves had failed as dramatists were among the least sympathetic. "But there is no more severe and exacting auditor than your would-be dramatist," he charged.

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[12]A Watch-Tower article in the February, 1879, issue also was critical of first-night evaluations. Pp. 6-7.

Two months later Byron's allegations drew a remarkably temperate--but yet pointed--reply from a critic, Dutton Cook. The critic observed that Byron's years of seasoning as an actor-dramatist had neither succeeded in teaching him "endurance" nor in easing his "sufferings consequent upon an excess of sensitiveness." Getting down to the playwright's disapproval of first-night criticism, Cook pointed out that such evaluations had been rendered "time out of mind." As for the festivities characteristic of premières, Cook agreed with the playwright essentially, but thought he had exaggerated the case somewhat. With infinite guile, Cook pointed out that such a situation helped the dramatist actually.

> The first performance, say of one of Mr. Byron's plays is an occasion of some excitement. Expectation is astir; there assembles a crowded and interested house. The professional critics form but a very small contingent; but the author's friends are there in great force, and the friends of the management. But what is the probable result? Surely the kindly reception of the play.
> (March, 1880, 143)

With such a cordial audience the critics were likely to tend toward "excessive leniency," the dramatist was told. Further, Byron was informed that the newspapers must operate on a principle of giving quick news and comment. "Every event must bear its comment, and as speedily as may be." Warming to his subject, the critic stated that since "modern drama must be classed amongst the literature of the lightest class," it was hardly necessary to pay a second visit to the theatre in order to render a just verdict. In fact, said Cook, a reconsideration of the piece might reveal more of its faults. Moreover, the press notices gave the dramatist invaluable publicity. With regard

to Byron himself, Cook maintained that he had enjoyed the praises of the press through a long string of successes. The failure of the dramatist's last effort the critic attributed to the public's resentment of "certain inconveniences in its plot." Cook strongly suggested that Byron had become spoiled by "a surfeit of success," and one is highly tempted to agree with the critic.

In the same issue another dramatist's wails were heard via a review written by F. C. Burnand of his own play, Ourselves. This unique commentary consisted largely of the playwright's tale of woe. Burnand was also the editor of Punch, but on the present occasion his sense of humor deserted him. Ourselves, billed as a "new" comedy, was based upon a French play. The author, however, had given his adaptation "a new reading of the characters" and "a reconstructed plot." Burnand informed the readers that illness had prevented him from attending the final rehearsals of the play, and the piece had thus been deprived of his last-minute supervision. He had also been prevented from attending the opening night festivities "on one of the foggiest nights of this exceptionally foggy winter." Burnand quoted the reviews from The Daily Telegraph which had commented unfavorably on the actors' nervousness and their need to be prompted, aside from interminable waits between acts. In addition, Burnand continued, more foggy nights had followed the first, and the managers had withdrawn the piece after an unsuccessful short run. In the playwright's opinion the work had been withdrawn too soon and hence "the genuine public" had not had an opportunity to make their own judgements. Burnand's reasoning is curiously illogical, as the following excerpt will reveal.

> One might as well judge of a Beauty [sic] by a blurred photograph of her, or come to the conclusion that your forehead has come in two, . . . because you saw yourself thus distorted and misrepresented in a defective cheap mirror at a second-rate seaside lodging-house, as form a correct opinion of "Ourselves" from the first performance. . . .
>
> If the comedy was so hopelessly bad, why did the management accept it?
>
> (March, 1880, 173)

In the light of all these considerations, Burnand thought the critics' function should properly start with the selection of the play. If "a bench of critics" were to approve of a given piece, then critical judgement on the first performance would deal exclusively with the "'mounting'" and the acting. "Critics always blame the author for everything," Burnand moaned plaintively. In Burnand's estimation the critics should not attend a performance until the "third or fourth night"; nor should the dramatist's name be disclosed until the work had been judged at least a "succès d'estime." It is most apparent that disgruntled authors were willing to place the blame for a given failure on anything but the products of their cerebration.[13]

Our Omnibus-Box of May, 1882, gave a critic's tale of woe. This is almost surely Clement Scott's opinion, as he also held the position of drama critic for The Daily Telegraph besides his editorship of the magazine. Said Scott,

> A manager sends out an invitation, and asks the favour of an opinion upon this or that production. If that opinion happens to be unfavourable, but one with which the

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[13]An article sharply reminding dramatists that if they would write "clever and witty plays," they would not have to fear the critic's indifference, appeared in September, 1894, pp. 161-164.

> public entirely coincides, it is a miracle if from manager, author, or actor, an offensive letter does not emanate. The first thing is to discover a motive and construct a reason. It never strikes manager, author, or actor that the motive is truth; and the reason, opinion--bad or good, worthless or otherwise--but still an opinion. . . . On the whole, I have come to the conclusion that though our critics may be "mostly fools," those they criticise are chiefly children.
>
> (May, 1882, 309)

Subsequent Omnibus-Boxes staunchly defended the embattled critics against the onslaughts of the stage world. (June, 1883, 373-375; January, 1884, 51-52; February, 1885, 94) In a lengthy feature article Scott again dwelled upon the trials of being a critic. "A critic's unpopularity lasts exactly as long as the play or the performance he cannot conscientiously praise," said the editor feelingly. (June, 1889, 306)

In May, 1890, new faults were imputed to the dramatic critics. According to the author, one "A.J.D.," there was a noticeable trend toward the flippant and the jocular in the reviewing of the day, which if unchecked would "drag down criticism to the degraded level to which it has already sunk in some parts of the United States."

> The average dramatic critique of to-day [sic] scarcely deserves that literary designation. . . . The literary merits of a play are neglected, its points slurred over, and the efforts of those taking part wilfully misconstrued. Indeed, everything is sacrificed to a few weak jokes, a cutting phrase or two, and a verbal assagai aimed at the personality of someone connected with the entertainment . . . .
>
> (May, 1890, 254)

Fortunately, the writer stated, this tendency had not yet found its way to "the more important papers," but, on the other hand, the latter

were often guilty of printing uninteresting and hackneyed reviews. Perhaps, it was suggested, it was their "deadly dulness" which had caused the public to take an interest in "the new style" of critical work. The writer held that the cultivators of the "the new style" were often persons who did not know anything about the stage, and were, besides, "absolutely indifferent to its welfare." It was the opinion of "A.J.D." that there was a happy medium attainable in contemporary criticism--a blend of "the careful thought of the past" plus "the vivid descriptive style and picturesque word-painting which this active age approves." The writer was delighted to say that there were a few practitioners of the happy medium extant.

It was inevitable that "A.J.D."'s strongly worded attack should provoke an answer. In July, 1890, Evelyn Ballantyne rose to champion what he called the "unfortunate minor critic." Ballantyne termed his opponent's "vehement tirade" largely a case of "special pleading." Ballantyne, however, was open to the same charge, since by his own admission he himself was a "member of the confraternity" of minor critics. Ballantyne pointed out that though a critic was supposed to guide public opinion, it would be dangerous for him to get too far ahead of popular thought. Such a course of action would only result in "alienating and disgusting" the people. Then,too,the critic with elevated tastes was apt to be "too much of an idealist," with the result that his tastes in dramatic works were likely to be too narrow.

> He cannot refrain from sneering superciliously at the honest fooling of a popular farce, and the harmless conventionalism of domestic melodrama, . . . altogether forgetting that honest and sound workmanship is always worthy of praise, even if applied to forms of dramatic art which do not appeal to his esoteric sympathies.
> (July, 1890, 21)

Moreover, the "severe" critic who professed to speak on behalf of the "'intelligent'" public had inaccurately gauged the capacities of the gallery-ites and the pittites.

However, Ballantyne was completely in accord with his opponent with respect to introducing the "objectionable personal element." However, the critic who wrote this type of notice was less at fault than were those he catered to. Then, again, different types of criticism appealed to various classes of playgoers. In Ballantyne's opinion the "great blot" in the new style of criticism could be found in the poor quality of the writing, characterized by "conventional smartness" and a fondness for "insidious Gallicisms."[14]

In the following month William Davenport Adams, professing to give a dramatic critic's point of view, took umbrage at the accusations of the two previous writers, "A.J.D." and Ballantyne. Adams claimed that the literary critics of the past had had more time to polish their reviews because there had been fewer plays for them to attend. Besides, they had catered to a small but "enthusiastic" band of readers almost sure to appreciate their efforts. Adams agreed essentially with Ballantyne regarding the necessity of pleasing various classes of theatre patrons and also regarding the narrowness of the superior critic. However, from Adams' point of view, the nature of the play, the necessity of conserving newspaper space, and the "idiosyncrasies of audiences"

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[14]An article on "Critics' Gallicisms" appeared later that year. The author concluded that there were a certain few French theatre terms which had no appropriate English equivalents. He decided, further, that the English language was in no danger of being inundated by the Gallic philological invasion. The Theatre, November, 1890, 209-213.

were accountable for the deficiencies in style to which the other two writers objected. Furthermore, the unworthy plays of the present day hardly inspired excellent writing. As for charges of ignorance of things dramatic, Adams contended that the "multitudinous newspaper critics" could scarcely be expected to be "monsters of erudition and experience." Also, the writer held that there were no bases for "A.J.D."'s allegations of lack of concern for the drama's wellbeing. (August, 1890, 55-59)

Dissatisfaction with the critics continued to be expressed in the magazine the following year--1891. Oliver Bluff, noting the marked increase in the number of critics, commented that there were now so many of them that for lack of sufficient artists to write about, they had taken to writing about their own colleagues. If Bluff can be trusted, the critics concentrated their efforts upon only the most successful and influential of the players, leaving "the modest and struggling actor, the devoted and retiring actress" to shift for themselves.

> The critic should be the actor's help, his guide, philosopher, and friend. . . . He should be on the look out [sic] for unrecognised talent, on the alert to point out pitfalls and lend a helping hand when feet slip. . . . "Instead of which," as the J.P. said, he too often goes disguised as the idol's claque.
>
> (October, 1891, 164)

Declaring the objective of criticism to be "to appreciate what is beautiful" and to guide others less perceptive in the same direction, Bluff stated that the modern critics could not meet this aim. According to the writer, with the shining exception of Clement Scott, none of the critics bothered to discuss the acting any more, concentrating instead, on the merits of the script and describing the scenery and

the costumes.

> This at least is certain, that stereotyped phrases are all the critic condescends to utter when his subject is not in the very front rank--of popular favourites, not artistic devotees--and that no attempt is made to awaken interest in new talent or record the impressions created by lesser celebrities. (October, 1891, 156)

Bluff closed with an appeal to the "pioneers" Archer and Walkley, whose influence he described as growing, to revitalize the art of acting by lending support and encouragement to the players.

In the December issue G. W. Dancy severely reprimanded one critic, William Archer, for attacking those of his colleagues unable to accept the Independent Theatre and Ibsen.[15] Dancy defended the more conservative critics against Archer's charges that they were "'narrow-minded, borné, illiterate or at least illiberal in culture.'" Furthermore Dancy questioned whether Archer's rather meagre literary accomplishments were sufficient grounds "for a fanatically violent appreciation of the author of 'Ghosts,' and a wanton attack on a body of men many of whom are not only Mr. Archer's seniors in years, but are entitled to his respect, . . . for their services to the drama, and . . . to literature." However, Dancy gave no answer to Archer's charges of narrow-mindedness. (December, 1891, 262-267)

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[15]Archer was again severely chastised for what Notes of the Month considered unjust criticism. Archer was accused of trying to counterbalance his fellow critics' adverse judgement of a certain play by "proportionate railing against the play's chief interpreter." April, 1893, pp. 235-237.

The antagonism between the conservatives and the liberals had been "simmering" since 1880, according to W. A. Lewis Bettany, who asserted that "long before the production of 'A Doll's House' in 1899 there had been signs of the coming clash of critical opinion." However, the writer did say that before the fateful year of 1889, the leader of the "Moderns," William Archer, had been pretty much alone but had gained adherents since that time. The leader of the opposition was none other than The Theatre's second editor, Clement Scott. Of Scott, Bettany remarked that "he leads a band ever ready to repudiate his authority, but every member of which is madly, nay fanatically, opposed to the 'New Movement.'" The issues of the debate were defined as the merits of "melodrama, the well-made play, and Ibsenism," or to put it another way, the "battle of realism and unconventionality against so-called Idealism and stage convention." After subjecting the individual followers of both schools to a merciless but seemingly fair examination, Bettany eventually made it apparent that he sided with the New Critics.[16]

> The two charges most frequently levelled against the new critics need not be taken too seriously. It is hardly fair to say that they welcome any literary product not English, though their reluctance to appreciate good acting is fair matter for attack. This latter failing has long served as a very pronounced line of dermarkation between the older men and their young opponents. . . . The new critics . . . prefer a good play to good acting.
>
> (June, 1892, 282)

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[16]An actor, Richard Davey, wrote an article similar to Bettany's in 1895, but opposed the New Critics because of their "insincere preference for what is morbid and unorthodox." September, 1895, pp. 137-141.

Although the writer did accuse the younger critics, especially Archer and Walkley, of being "unreasonable" in expecting every play to be "a drama of thesis," he thought that the new school had made two noteworthy contributions to the drama.

> In the first place, the pretensions of the older critics have been decisively exposed, and theatrical criticism has been taken more seriously; and secondly, the dramatic pace has been quickened. Pinero and Jones can no longer be taken for strong meat.
> (June, 1892, 283)

In 1893, a certain "Romany" clearly demonstrated that the new critics had failed to make headway with him. In February "Romany" complained sarcastically of the new school's egotism and their indiscriminate fondness for allusions to authorities. As for the play, "there will naturally be no objection to the occasional introduction of some slight allusion to the play and the acting, but it should be in that form of graceful banter and good-natured toleration that clearly indicatesthe writer's superiority over everyone concerned," he added derisively. (February, 1893, 69-74)

In May the same writer uttered "a cry in the wilderness" to plead for a return to the old-fashioned type of first-night descriptive reporting, consisting of as much of the plot as could be recalled, together with an account of the audience's reception of the piece. "Romany" stoutly maintained that no more than this could be accomplished on one representation of the play. However, he surmised that perhaps "the system" was primarily at fault. The writer closed with an appeal to the critics "in the name of Art and the welfare of the drama."

> Let them lay aside all desire to carp and cavil, and allow the author, if he can, to make the desired impression. If he fails, the play, so far as the critics are concerned, is bad, and they can say so; but if, on the other hand, they are interested or amused let them be content in the first instance to supply the public with a simple record of the emotional effect of the play upon themselves, and reserve for future consideration and discussion the causes of that effect, or in other words, a critical estimate of the production.
>
> (May, 1893, 258)

In 1894 Clement Scott came once again to the attention of the readers. In September, Scott, provoked by Sarcey's statement in support of delayed criticism, hastened to inform his audience that "to cry for the abolition of first night criticism is to cry for a cessation of newspaper enterprise." In the ex-editor's opinion, the critic had only a fleeting influence upon his reading audience. Moreover, in Scott's estimation, the "great art" of the dramatic journalist is "instinctively to gauge or foretell public opinion," but in this respect the critics were by no means infallible. "Believe me," Scott confided, "the critic, or expert, or playtaster, does no more than the trusted playgoer does at every dinner table or social gathering. He says 'go and see such and such a play' or 'don't go and see it.'" Scott commented that the "great antagonism" between the two opposing schools of criticism was a "managerial perplexity" because the "younger managers" thought that the public wanted the new drama. In the writer's "humble opinion" such pieces never would gain the favor of the people. (September, 1894, 100-105)

In the same month W. Davenport Adams took exception to those of his colleagues who felt constrained to pre-judge the capabilities of certain actors and actresses. Scott was singled out for special

censure, since he had made "the definite declaration" that Ellen Terry was incapable of impersonating a "vulgar" laundress in Sardou's Madame Sans-Gêne. Adams reproached his cohort for committing himself to "a theory and standard of criticism decidedly derogatory to the histrionic art." Asked Adams:

> Miss Ellen Terry, he says in effect, cannot represent for us the vulgar Madame Sans-Gêne, because she has no vulgarity in her composition. . . . Is acting, then a matter only of personality, of "temperament"? . . . Is there no such thing as an imaginativeness which enables the artist to comprehend and to simulate passions and qualities which he or she does not possess?
> (September, 1894, 109)

The writer also saw the harm that advance criticism could do to the potential performer. "It is unfair to the artist, because it excites prejudice and may hamper him in his work." Besides, actors have a faculty of doing the unexpected, and the critical "prophet may be hoist on [sic] his own petard." If his colleagues must give advance criticism then it would be best to give it in the "form of appreciation and encouragement," the author advised.

Never one to ignore criticism of himself, Scott immediately returned his associate's fire in the next month.[17] His opening salvo was somewhat immaterial, for he called Adams down on usage. "Whether I can ever be hoist on my own petard, I do not know. It would be a matter of some difficulty, but I will let it pass," he said magnanimously. Getting down to the matter at issue, Scott firmly reiterated

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[17]Our Watch-Tower of November, 1896, devoted itself to criticism of Scott's sensitivity to any kind of unfavorable comment. Pp. 237-240.

his original statement that Miss Terry by virtue of her "peculiar nervous and imaginative temperament" was utterly incapable of portraying "distinctly cockney-humour characters." Besides, the writer believed that advance criticism could save "our greatest actors and actresses" from the "serious errors of their lives." Moreover, Scott contended that pre-judging was practiced "every day and hour by every manager and author in existence." Here Scott seems to have overlooked the fact that the dramatist and manager are responsible for preparing a given production, a function totally outside the province of the critic who is concerned solely with the finished product.[18] (October, 1894, 158-161)

Those readers who had supported Adams in the little controversy must have been pleased to see Ellen Terry come through "with a brilliant display of acting," as the magazine's review described it. Adams, however, had to wait almost two and a half years for his vindication, since the play was not given until April, 1897. (May, 1897, 282-284)

In November attention was called in two separate articles to the point of view of the general public. Charles Dickens remarked that fascinating as the "heated discussions, the withering sarcasms, the bitter personalities, and the scathing satire with which the theatrical world is periodically enlivened" might be, he was of the opinion that the general public cared not a whitfor them.

> It is the great inarticulate playgoing public . . .
> which, caring . . . little about Art in the abstract,

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[18]This is one of the points Adams makes in his reply to Scott in Notes of the Month. November, 1894, p. 273.

> and only demanding to be amused or interested, really calls the tune by virtue of its payment of the piper, and which, by the mere weight of numbers, practically settles the rules of the game.
>
> (November, 1894, 221)

Adair Fitz-Gerald must have deflated certain journalistic egos when he questioned the importance of newspaper critiques. According to Fitz-Gerald, the general public customarily consult their friends and thus serve as their own critics.

> The thinking man will understand why the general public cannot be expected regularly to read theatrical notices; we are not all suffering from dramaphobia, [sic] much as we may love the drama and dramatic art.
>
> (November, 1894, 241)

In December, A. B. Walkley, one of the New Critics, found his patience exhausted by what he called "fulsome" praise of the "public's large heart." The writer strongly contradicted Dickens and Scott in their contention that the critic should have the ability to gauge public tastes and opinions. Proclaimed Walkley,

> Criticism of a work of art--play, or book, or picture, or what not--concerns itself, I should have thought, solely with that work, with the artist's aim in producing it, with such questions as, how far he has succeeded in his aim, how the work compares with others of the same class, and what that class is. Criticism . . . is an aid to enjoyment: its function is to intensify the agreeable sensations and ideas afforded by a work of art by explaining and rationalising and coordinating them. What has this to do with the process of divining--and forthwith adopting--the sensations and ideas of other people?
>
> (December, 1894, 286)

Walkley's ideas about the functions of criticism are admirable, but still one must remember that it is the public that supports the stage and therefore it cannot be ignored completely. Nevertheless the critic

certainly should not be called upon to assume the role of prophet, replete with crystal ball and divining rod.

In September, 1895, William Archer found an unqualifiedly ardent supporter. The inspiration for the strong tribute to the critic was a letter sent by an irate dramatic author to a rival newspaper protesting Archer's criticism of his piece in the World. A part of the "precious document" had had to be deleted, for fear of libel laws. Protested Archer's admirer, Andin U. R. Knestte, ". . . On what grounds does Mr. Owen Hall assume the right of publicly protesting against a criticism written by a gentleman invited to pass judgment on his work, even though that criticism be too severe, which in the present instance, most emphatically, it was not?" Knestte hinted that if such a precedent were to become established, dire results would be the inevitable outcome, and one is inclined to agree with him. The writer closed with an appreciation of Archer's contributions as a guide of public tastes. (September, 1895, 141-146)

In the following month the writers in The Theatre finally came to grips with a grave problem which had been simmering, so to speak, since the early days of the magazine. The Watch-Tower of February, 1879, had uttered a vigorous protest against "the employment as dramatic critics of gentlemen who have blossomed forth as dramatic authors." Asked the Tower:

> Is it in human nature to believe that a dramatist can find it in his heart to roundly abuse the productions of friendly managers, even though they be bad? Could his own pieces, if they chanced to be failures, receive the full blame due to them in the columns of his own paper? Could he avoid unconsciously writing up the species of dramatic work best within his range--his favourite, because he does it best himself?
> (February, 1879, 7)

Even if the dramatist-critic were absolutely honest and unbiassed, the Watch-Tower averred that such a one would always be suspect. All things considered, the Tower thought that "the critic should be above that kind of natural suspicion which he may avoid by retreating from an equivocal and compromising position."

During Scott's editorship the Omnibus-Boxes of August, 1885, and May, 1886, alluded to opposition to the dramatist-critic. Scott of course defended the practice of employing playwrights as critics, inasmuch as he himself functioned in a dual capacity. Our Omnibus-Box contended that it took an expert to judge an expert, and moreover, the dramatist-critic was firmly established by long custom.

The Watch-Tower of October, 1895, was as forcefully opposed to the custom as its 1879 predecessor had been. The Tower was of the opinion that at the present time the custom had provoked flagrant abuses.

> Dramatic criticism is now rapidly descending in some influential quarters to the level of quid pro quo--is being regulated according to the condition of the theatrical market. If the critic-dramatist's play is accepted, he is like Mr. Paulton's Niobe--all smiles, all complacency; if it is returned to him, he breathes fire and slaughter against the manager who is so madly unappreciative of his powers.
>
> (October, 1895, 187-188)

As for rival playwrights, the Tower thought it "contrary to human nature that he [the dramatist-critic]should rejoice in the good luck of those with whom he is competing."

Continuing, the Tower stated that "the two avocations are obviously incongruous," and that the situation had become "a scandal." Moreover, the managers were becoming "restive" under the present

circumstances. The public, too, was likely to suffer due to ignorance "of the hatreds and the jealousies, of the loves and the favouritism, that sway so much of the newspaper criticism of to-day." And again, the dangers were intensified by the custom of publishing anonymous critiques, thus permitting the prejudiced critic to say what he pleased without fear of identification. Affirmed the Tower, ". . . Something must be done."

Roused to action by the Watch-Tower, various interested persons gave vent to their feelings about the dramatist-critics in the Round Tables of November and December. The symposium topic was phrased in these words: "Should Dramatic Critics Write Plays?" Of the seven November contributors, it is strange that only three answered the question with a flat no. Alfred E. T. Watson pronounced the situation "anomalous":

> If the well-paid counsel were suddenly to leave his seat at the bar, to mount the bench and deliver judgment on the case in which he had been engaged, it would be thought a little startling; but this is a precisely equivalent situation to that of the critic-playwright.
> (November, 1895, 256)

Another contributor, Charles Dickens, was in essential accord with Watson.

Arthur Escott utilized the ancient feud between Charles Kean, the actor-manager, and Douglas Jerrold, a critic-dramatist, to support his contention that the situation was fraught with "danger and scandal." Said Escott: "Jerrold had two widely-circulated papers at his command, and he used them for years to gratify personal spleen. Not a few of his readers, we may be sure, accepted his envenomed attacks as outspoken and unbiased criticism, ..." (November, 1895, 267)

The remaining four contributors gave largely equivocal replies to the symposium question. Significantly, at least three of them were critics themselves: J. F. Nisbet, Malcolm Watson, W. Davenport Adams. Nisbet's point of view may be summarized in his own words:

> . . . It is impossible to generalise about the honesty of so heterogeneous a group of persons as those who, in London, while professing journalism, may also dabble in playwriting. Some will be scrupulously honest, and others probably the reverse, just as in any other walk of life you may name. . . . But let us have no retailing of malicious gossip on this subject, no casting of reflections upon a whole flock because it may contain one black sheep.
>
> (November, 1895, 260-261)

Malcolm Watson made the same point that Nisbet had made, but added one other idea. The Theatre, charged the writer, has gone "too far or not far enough." Watson wanted the magazine to make its accusations explicit, to name the offender, so that he might be "unmasked and excommunicated." "But," concluded Watson, "until something like real proof is forthcoming, I shall decline to believe that, merely because he perpetrates a play, your critic is bound to become a monster of venality, spleen, and other deadly sins."[19] (November, 1895, 261-262)

James Mortimer, a playwright, introduced his contribution with a statement that criticism is "an ungrateful and invidious task." Mortimer was of the opinion that "either a critic is fair and honest or he is not." Providing that the critic is honest, the writer would prefer to have a piece assessed by one who knows something about the "professional intricacies of his subject." Besides, the contributor

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[19]Both Nisbet and Watson wrote plays also.

personally did not know of an instance of biased comment from any of the "prominent" critics, among whom could be numbered "several" dramatists. His last statement was based upon twenty-five years' association with these individuals. (November, 1895, 262-264)

W. Davenport Adams thought that the magazine was taking the whole subject "too seriously." He believed that the public was not unaware of the dramatists who were also critics. "There are no secrets now in journalism," he averred. Adams also revealed a touch of righteousness in his make-up in saying that "certainly it is not for any one of us to sit in judgment on his fellows." For any critic concerned, it was first a matter "for his own conscience" and second, for the newspaper proprietor who had hired him. Furthermore, any injustices--and Adams conceded that there might be some instances of them--would be balanced out by the multiplicity of dramatic commentaries. (November, 264-265)

It is evident that the four who supplied equivocal answers looked at the question from a personal or individual viewpoint. They sought specific instances of the abuse and utterly ignored the moral and ethical principles involved. In addition, Adams made a questionable final point in stating that critical injustices would be counterweighted. One of the other contributors had already alluded to the matter of multiple criticism in pointing out that Jerrold had "two widely-circulated" papers in which to exert his influence. Other writers of The Theatre had deplored the custom of permitting one person to write criticisms for a number of papers and journals. The Watch-Tower of February, 1879, had protested the pratice of "multifold reporting," and "An Ingenuous Playgoer" had spoken out against the custom in October,

1895. (October, 1895, 206-209) Clement Scott, it will be recalled, served simultaneously as critic for The Daily Telegraph and for the Illustrated London Times, to give a concrete example.

In December, five more theatrical personalities expressed their views. "An Actor-Manager" explaining his anonymity by saying that he could not "afford to make more enemies," confirmed the magazine's allegations. "Of late years there has been an increasing tendency on the part of some dramatic critics and other journalists to use the influence they possess to get a play brought out." Moreover, he hinted that he had paid what amounted to blackmail money. "If the critic-dramatist represents a powerful journal, I purchase his play outright, but with no intention to give it a hearing." (December, 1895, 317-318)

Herbert Beerbohm-Tree, another actor-manager, tried to express himself tactfully, but he too saw "an element of serious danger" for all the parties concerned. (December, 1895, 318-319)

A dramatist, Edward Rose, gave an equivocal answer. On the whole, however, he seemed to be opposed to the custom, though he thought a few "experts" in "our number" a distinct advantage. Rose was unable, so he said, to see any basis for the charge "that the dramatic critic who writes plays is necessarily a scoundrel who will do all he can do to ruin the plays of any rival."

The next contributor, Douglas Ginaodh, twisted the original question around to this one:

> I begin by assuming that the main object of the discussion is to secure the conditions that most conduce to the existence of the best possible plays and of the best possible criticism. What are those conditions?
>
> (December, 1895, 320)

The writer then set up a highly improbable situation in order to answer his own question. He set forth the hypothesis that the "very greatest dramatic faculty in the nation" might also be a critic. Similarly the converse situation might exist. If one were to deny these prodigies the privilege of practicing both professions, Ginaodh thought that one would defeat the "main purpose, namely, to secure the conditions most conducive to the existence of the best possible plays, and of the best possible criticism."

"An Old Dramatic Critic" gave the opinion of a critic who does not write plays.

> The non-playwright-critic, then, can hardly have failed to observe, either with amusement or with regret, the straits to which his critical colleagues are put when they attempt to run with the hare while hunting with the hounds. He must even have himself experienced, if only indirectly, some of the inconveniences arising from the duplicated function of certain of his brethen.
>
> (December, 1895, 322)

Echoes of the Green Room observed that the dramatist-critic controversy had aroused much newspaper comment. It quoted the opinions of the leading papers on the subject. Here too there was wide difference of viewpoint. (November, 1895, 302; December, 1895, 365-368)

To recapitulate, despite the Watch Tower's wry remark in the early days of the magazine that to criticize the critics was a task "never . . . very pleasant, and rarely perhaps . . . very profitable," the writers of The Theatre, undeterred, gave much attention and thought to this absorbing subject. The critics were assailed by disappointed playwrights and actors, but were able to present some rather telling rebuttals. However, they seem not to have acquitted themselves as well in replying to certain charges lodged against them. They would seem to

have been on the losing side of the argument in the cases of manifold criticism and dramatist-critics. However, they were more successful in defending the practice of first night criticism. During the lifetime of The Theatre, a period which marked a very crucial shift in British drama, normal individual differences in critical taste and thought were intensified by the revolution in the writing of plays. Hence, the critics themselves were divided into two camps, which frequently clashed furiously. Their penchant for internecine warfare prevented the body of critics from presenting a united front before the theatrical world, and thus left them open to even more censure.

Society

Throughout its lifetime The Theatre displayed a tremendous interest in improving the social and professional status of the player. Writers of the magazine noted every advance in this direction with approval. However, they were not unaware of the player's responsibilities to society and took care to remind the player of his duties.

The Watch-Tower of September, 1878, observed with considerable satisfaction the attitude of an essentially "non-playgoing public" toward the actor Henry Irving. The actor had recently made speeches at Northampton and Birmingham before audiences described as follows:

> They would have thought [a few years ago] that to make a stage-player, be he never so popular and never so generous, their honoured guest, was little less than suicidal, and would at best be tolerated only for the sake of the good that the actor might chance to derive from the company in which he found himself.
>
> (September, 1878, 97)

These audiences had praised Irving for taking "'a wide view of his profession'" and for having the "'intelligence and energy to take interest in places and work not immediately connected with his own profession.'" Commenting that there still remained much to be done to cement relations between the actor and "a large portion of the thoughtful and educated public," the Watch-Tower concluded on this happy note:

> Without any slavish craving after worldly advancement for the actor, we may yet be honestly glad to note any marked increase in the respect shown to him by society. . . . It can only be good that the stage-player should be recognised as a member of society worthy of respect by reason and not in spite of the art which he has chosen to follow; for such recognition will carry with it the social responsibilities which no man or woman, and certainly no body of men and women, can safely disavow. And if the actor has in this direction something to learn, . . . he has assuredly much to teach. . . .
> (September, 1878, 98)

The actor's responsibilities to the society in which he lived were given further consideration by the Watch-Tower of February, 1879. Ired by the attitude taken in "a high-class contemporary"--that actors cannot be taken seriously as persons of responsibility and that it would be unprofitable for them if they were--the Tower asked some pointed questions of those espousing this point of view. How far could the actor safely go without stepping over the boundary? Was this freedom from responsibility worth having? Would it not, rather, be a "curse in disguise?" Indeed, the Tower was of the opinion that the actor owed more, rather than less, to society by the very nature of his calling.

> Caeteris paribus, the best man, the man of most sympathy with his fellow-men, most consideration for their feelings, and most respect for the social obligations which he incurs,

> will be the best actor; and the truest, purest, worthiest woman will be the best actress. The calling of the player we hold to be amongst the very highest, and its lofty position amongst other callings, so far from giving the license of irresponsibility to its professors, merely imposes upon them higher duties. Here, as elsewhere, noblesse oblige.
>
> (February, 1879, 11)

Taking as his text a passage from the Pall Mall Gazette which stated that the actor's calling "'has been too often associated with what is morally objectionable,'" Frank A. Marshall undertook to show that rather than putting the blame upon the stage, it should be placed squarely upon fashionable society.[20] "Society, especially fashionable Society, has again and again tried its utmost to corrupt the stage, but . . . in the worst times it has only imperfectly succeeded," Marshall declared. In tracing the history of the drama from the time of the Greeks to that of David Garrick, Marshall attempted to show that in every period, the audience had been more fond of the salacious and the indecent than had those associated with the stage. Even the Restoration plays, "for the morality of which little can be said," contain "tributes to virtue which show that the writers would not, nor dared not, set all moral laws at defiance." Additionally, the writers of Restoration comedy were men of rank and fashion themselves. Hence, Marshall arrived at the conclusion that "the licentiousness of

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[20]Marshall was described by Lowe as "a familiar figure in London society, and his abilities as a dramatist and critic are generally recognised." R. W. Lowe, A Bibliographical Account of English Theatrical Literature (London: John C. Nimmo, 1888), p. 232.

society, not the corrupting influence of the drama, was clearly responsible for the libertinism of these comedies."

Referring to the immoralities of certain popular actresses of the post-Restoration, Marshall took a "you-too" attitude toward society.

> At the time when the profligacy of some of the actresses gained for the stage so unenviable a reputation what was the state of things behind the scenes? The most fashionable men of the day sat in rows, two or three deep, on the stage, and went in and out of the Green-room and of the dressing-rooms like tame cats.
> (March, 1879, 87)

Marshall took care to point out that an actor, David Garrick, had been the one to rid the stage of this "scandal."

Subsequently in June, 1879, Marshall discussed the morality of the stage of his time. Alluding to the statements of Cardinal Manning in 1876, in which the theatres had been denounced as "'centres of corruption'" partly because of their location in disreputable neighborhoods, Marshall accused the Cardinal of being unjust. While fully admitting that the neighborhoods of the theatres were "more or less remarkable for immorality," Marshall was able to find some ingenious arguments on behalf of the theatres.

> The visitors to the . . . theatres . . . generally hurry away from the spot as soon as the entertainment is over; and very few, if any, among the spectators or actors in the disgraceful scenes. . . . are furnished by the audiences of the theatres. Were any honest attempt made by the Government to do away with the abominable scandal which infests this quarter, they would find no more earnest allies than the managers of theatres. . . . The Criterion . . . occupies the site of one of the vilest so-called "Saloons" that ever existed in London; . . . I do not scruple to say that the presence of a theatre

> has exercised a beneficial influence, and but for that influence the state of things would be much worse than it is.
>
> (June, 1879, 306)

All these considerations led Marshall to decide that the theatres could exercise only "good moral influence" on the general public. Those few theatres featuring questionable forms of entertainment were merely catering to the vicious segments of society, in Marshall's opinion. Therefore the correction of the abuses of the stage was the responsibility of society, not of the stage. Marshall closed with a plea to actors and actresses that they help maintain the standards of the stage by refusing to perform in immoral entertainments.

It would appear that Marshall, in his understandable zeal to defend the theatre, might yet have overstated his case. He placed the blame upon society, but were not theatre people and the stage a part of society? Moreover, the managers might have been less passive in their acceptance of the disreputable conditions outside their theatres.

The September, 1879, Watch-Tower offered a suggestion to the players. It urged them to abandon the custom of the benefit performance, described as being "almost as old as the English drama itself." Actors and actresses were wont to give performances, the proceeds of which were to go directly to them. On such occasions the entertainment was very often specially arranged, and fellow players gave their valued assistance to the honored one. In the days of Mrs. Siddons the player often had to swallow his self respect and solicit the support of the patrons personally. According to the Tower, even Mrs. Siddons, "to whom even princes of the blood and statesmen paid deference," was once seen delivering the posters for her own benefit. Although the

actors now no longer had to solicit the patronage of the wealthy, still the Tower thought that taking a benefit tended to lower the newly won dignity of the actor. For that reason it was hoped that the benefit performance would soon cease. (September, 1879, 67-69)

H. Barton Baker reminded the present-day actor that he had much to be thankful for.[21] There might have been glamor and romance associated with the strolling days of old, but Baker reminded his readers that the actor frequently had little to eat and often no place to sleep.

> The so-called romance of the stage was romance in a very humble life, a very tattered and dirty and hungry romance; people call it amusing, so perhaps it was, even to the heroes and heroines--in retrospect, but it must have been a very sad reality during its composition. They were careless, light-hearted vagabonds, always ready to make jests upon their miseries; but the jest was too often forced, the laugh too frequently hysterical.
> (November, 1881, 279)

However, in September, 1885, H. Savile Clarke proclaimed that the actor's acceptance in society was due not to his profession, but due to his success in it.

> For the actor and musician has no status from his profession, like a barrister or a clergyman. . . . If he wins, he wins in spite of his profession, not because of it, and his position even then springs rather from his eminence than from the art in which he is distinguished. For these are the days of the worship of notoriety of any kind.
> (September, 1885, 135)

In Clarke's opinion those actors who were lionized by fashionable society were those relatively few who had achieved conspicuous success.

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[21] An article in the March, 1893, number enlarged upon this theme. It pointed out that actors of the past had frequently been the helpless objects of insult and assault. See pp. 132-135.

The vast majority who had not risen to these dizzying heights were left with no social status derived from their position as actors. However, Clarke declared, there were some among this group who had had social status before they had entered the profession. Clarke attributed the fast lessening prejudice against the actor to the "number of well-born, well-bred, and well-educated young men and women" now attracted to the stage by the fast-dying prejudice. "The social recognition obtained by the best artists on the boards has a good deal to do with winning them eligible recruits," explained the writer. While their artistic contributions might be questionable, Clarke thought that it was very much to the interest of the stage that "the bibulous Bohemian of old days" was having to yield his place "to the gentlemanly and cultivated actor so frequently to be met with now." Clarke pointed out, in addition, that the stage still had far to climb in its efforts to gain recognition. No peerages, knighthoods, and other such honors had yet been given to any actor, whereas the other arts had often been recognized.

> For my own part, it seems unfair to confer a well-merited knighthood upon Sir Arthur Sullivan and deny the same honour to the very original genius of Mr. W. S. Gilbert. Similarly, one can see no reason why we should not have Sir Henry Irving as well as Sir Frederick Leighton. . . .
> (September, 1885, 138)

Clarke was optimistic that the acting profession would receive these well-merited honors "even in our own generation." He concluded with an appeal to "the Sovereign" to see that justice was done.

Clarke had admitted that some of the young actors of good family might not have any knowledge of elocution or the ability to portray

character, but had given them credit for raising the social level of the stage they adorned. That he was right in his estimate of their artistic contributions, is confirmed by T. Edgar Pemberton's resentful article on what he called the "professional amateur."[22] Pemberton thought that "grievous harm" was being done to the drama by the presence of these "professional amateurs" in the touring companies sent around the various provinces with the latest London successes. According to the writer these neophytes were "just clever enough" to escape severe censure, but not capable enough to be "honestly praised." Pemberton feared that if the trend of employing these incompetents were to continue, theatrical interest in the provinces would fall off to a dangerous extent. (January, 1895, 17-20)

The Watch-Tower of February, 1895, replied to Pemberton and others of like mind. The Watch-Tower thought that Pemberton's criticism "as applying to touring companies generally" was a bit overstated. It also reminded the contributor that the touring companies could not afford to pay high salaries.

> How many practised London hands, who fulfil the two conditions of being accomplished actors and members of the ranks of the unemployed, are willing to take the paltry salaries which are all that the smaller managers are able to afford?
>
> (February, 1895, 63)

Moreover, said the Tower, theatrical times were generally bad, and it was unfair to saddle the "professional amateur" with all the blame. Besides, some of the provinces have been "overdone." Last, the Tower

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[22]See also in this connection, The Theatre, September, 1897, p. 132.

pointed out that the ambitious young actor had to get his seasoning somewhere. "If the race of actors is to continue in the land it must necessarily continually be recruited from outside, and recruits are naturally and inevitably beginners." (February, 1895, 65)

Clarke had pleaded in his article for official recognition for the actor. There is evidence in The Theatre that certain actors were also speaking on their own behalf. Watch-Tower of March, 1895, informed the readers that Henry Irving had strongly appealed for official recognition for the acting profession. Irving was quoted as saying that "'systems and courts, titles and offices, have all their part in a complex and organised civilisation, and no man, no calling, is particularly pleased at being compelled to remain outside a closed door.'" As the Tower explained, it was this lack of recognition which unjustly prevented the actor from attending the royal Court.

> Other artists, the painter, the sculptor, the musician, may go to Court; but the actor, for no valid reason, is excluded. A tradesman who sells furniture in Tottenham-court-road, and who has sufficient wealth to make him a power in a political party and obtain for him a knighthood, is invited to a Levée, from which the head of the dramatic profession is debarred.
> (March, 1895, 125)

To support its claims that "the vagaries of Court etiquette are easily supreme," the Tower pointed out with asperity that when Royalty wished to solicit funds for pet charities, it called upon the actor to provide the entertainment for it--gratuitously . After restating the case for acting as an art, the Tower concluded that the actors "have a right to demand the removal of what in this country is a conspicuous slur."

Two months later Irving addressed the members of the Actors' Association and urged more "cohesion" within the ranks of the profession. He pleaded for the formation of a professional association along the lines of the Royal Academy of Art, which, among other things, "'would wield a social influence that could not be despised.'" The Tower was wholly in sympathy with Irving's ideas. According to the Tower, the vast middle class, which "rules public opinion in this country," had yet to recognize acting as a respectable profession. An Institute of Actors might effect a change of public opinion.

> It would be for the Incorporated Actors to impress the general mind with a sense of the utility, the solidity, the "respectability" if you will, of acting as a phase of human effort.
>
> (May, 1895, 257)

Then, too, an Institute might do much good within the profession.

> It could, and would, erect a standard of personal conduct in the affairs of life which, if steadily maintained, could not fail to benefit greatly our players as a class, and as members of the body politic.
>
> (May, 1895, 257)

It is clear from the tone of this article that while the actor had come a long way from the good old strolling days, there was still much ground to be covered before he could achieve the much-desired respect of all.

The Tower's disquisition on acting as an art had apparently failed to impress "that well-known and able writer," Ouida, for the June Watch-Tower article consisted of a refutation of the lady's assertion that acting is only "'a reflex art, not self-originating and self-contained.'" In Ouida's opinion, the actor's art was dependent upon the words of the dramatist. Retorted the Tower:

> Without the vocalist or the instrumentalist the composer would be nought. Without the actor the playwright would not exist. . . . A play, like a sonata must be interpreted. . . . The actor, at his best, not only interprets, but enhances and intensifies; he creates as well as expounds.
> (June, 1895, 320)

To look at the bright side of things, The Theatre was able to report in March, 1895, that Irving had received a degree from the University of Dublin. A picture of the actor suitably solemn in his academic dress accompanied the announcement. In April of the same year, the Queen had thawed sufficiently to receive the venerable actress, Mrs. Keeley, at Buckingham Palace. When interviewed by The Theatre the actress had described the Queen's reception of her as "so kind." And in the July number the Watch-Tower was delightedly hailing the knighthood conferred upon Henry Irving in May. The door had been opened at last. The Tower proclaimed it "in one sense the most important event in the history of the English stage." The same issue ran an article in The Round Table by Percy Fitzgerald on "The Social Position of the Actor," which remarked in closing that Irving's knighthood was "richly deserved and really conferred in obedience to a unanimous call from an appreciative public." Echoes from the Green Room reported that Irving had been cheered by the Lyceum audience on the day of the announcement. Also, a gratified acting profession was busy making plans to present Irving with a message of congratulation, which was slated to be composed by Mr. Pinero, and "placed in a gold casket designed by Mr. Forbes Robertson."

In the year 1896, The Theatre was much concerned about what it regarded as a journalistic misuse of the term actress. The Watch-

Tower of August described the reportorial practice of calling disreputable women brought into police courts "actresses," as a "gross outrage on members of an honourable profession." Commented the Tower tartly:

> It is designed to pique the curiosity of the reader who finds that the so-called "actress" has no theatre except the thoroughfare, and no stage but the pavement. The excuse for the misrepresentation is that the woman is alleged to have occupied, some time or other, a nondescript position in the dumbshow of burlesque. That this does not and never did entitle her to be called an actress is a reflection which seldom troubles the reporter.
>
> (August, 1896, 59)

To aid the police reporters, the Tower suggested the use of the word super in lieu of actress. "Then," asserted the Tower, "it will be definitely understood that actors and actresses are people who act, and that the art of acting is quite foreign to most of the ladies who appear before the judicial tribunals with antecedents suggestive of theatrical entertainments."

There is evidence that the journalists defiantly resisted the Tower's efforts to enrich their vocabularies, for the September number reported that the Daily Courier had run a story about the "'scandalous affair'" at the home of an "'actress.'" The "actress" in question had turned out to be a music-hall performer. With intense satisfaction, however, Echoes from the Green Room announced that a "distinguished actor" had written to express the gratitude of the profession for the magazine's "'timely utterance on this subject.'" (September, 1896, 168-169)

The February, 1897, Watch-Tower again rushed to the defense of players against attacks from "a few literary and journalistic circles."

These writers had tried to show that the player was unworthy of notice, because--according to the Tower--actors and actresses were popular. The Tower's retort was that the actor's current popularity was due to the activity of the journalists themselves.

> It is not, nowadays, the player who begs for a measure of publicity; it is the publicists who insist upon dragging him into the open. . . . Wherefore, it seems rather ungracious on the part of such writers that they should censure a condition of things which they have done their best to bring about.
>
> (February, 1897, 64)

Pursuing the subject further, the Tower decided that the journalistic hostility had been motivated by resentment of the social and professional accession of the player. With a brave attempt to accept this slight setback philosophically, the Tower concluded resignedly:

> The "dead set" to which we have referred is just what might be expected to follow upon the long upward movement taken of recent years by the histrionic profession. Progress of that sort is bound to be met by some in a spirit of vulgar and narrow-minded detraction. . . .
>
> (February, 1897, 66)

<u>The Theatre</u> could well take comfort in further honors bestowed upon the actors. In August, for instance, a knighthood was bestowed upon the actor, Mr. Bancroft, famous as an exponent of Robertsonian comedy. The Tower expressed its particular gratification that Mrs. Bancroft also thereby gained a well-merited title.[23] (August, 1897, 53-56)

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[23]The April, 1897, number contained an article advocating the conferring of honors upon deserving actresses. See pp. 196-198.

Furthermore, the seemingly indefatigable Henry Irving, "escorted by the Dean of Hereford," had unveiled a statue of Sarah Siddons located close to her grave. This statue was deemed worthy of notice because it was the first of its kind to be placed in London. (July, 1897, 1-4)

The legal status of the actor was also a matter of concern to The Theatre magazine. Even in the 1890's, traces of an ancient suspicion against the actor as rogue and vagabond still lingered in many quarters.[24] The Watch-Tower's ire was aroused in 1896 by no less a personage than the Lord Chief Justice. According to the Tower, the Chief Justice had blundered egregiously at a recent dinner for the benefit of the Royal Theatrical Fund, in asking the "'gentlemen play-actors'" present whether they were aware that until 1825 they had been classed by Act of Parliament as vagabonds. Despite the Justice's subsequent observation that things had changed considerably since, The Theatre fumed that the Justice should have known that the Parliamentary edict had never applied to the "properly authorised actor."[25] Rather, continued the Tower, the Parliamentary Act of 1597 had been promulgated with the express purpose of protecting the reputable actor.

> . . . The Act was a charter of his rights and privileges. It really acknowledged and assured him of legal status. It gave the protection of the law to those who were

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[24]See, for example, May, 1895, p. 10.

[25]The Tower cited as its authority an article by Thomas Marriott on "The Legal Status of the Actor," which appeared in the May, 1895, issue. Marriott was described by the Tower as a "solicitor well versed in the antiquities of law."

> players of good repute, . . . and condemned as rogues and vagabonds only those who, on account of bad character or gross incompetence, were unable to obtain patronage.
>
> (July, 1896, 2)

This Act had been repealed in 1713, but an Amending Act had followed in 1737 which decreed that any person performing on the stage without the authorization of the Lord Chamberlain be declared a rogue and vagabond. Snapped the Tower, "Let us hope that the Lord Chief Justice will read a little more before he again speaks of the legal status of the actor in the past."

In short, The Theatre has shown that the professional, social, and legal status of the player had improved enormously by the late Victorian period. There yet lingered, nevertheless, traces of prejudice against the actor as a rogue, vagabond, Bohemian, or what you will. However, the knighthoods bestowed upon Irving and Bancroft were clear indications that ancient prejudices were fast dying away. The Theatre was ever quick to defend the actor against ignorant suspicion and to record any gains in his status. Moreover, the magazine was careful to remind the actor of his obligations to society.

This chapter has described and analyzed the interactions of four powerful social forces and the Stage as seen in The Theatre magazine. The four major forces were: the Church, Government Censorship, the Press, and Society. This investigation, it is hoped, has helped to bring the picture of the late-Victorian theatre into still sharper focus.

CHAPTER IV

IBSEN AND THE NEW DRAMA

"In the early 'nineties Ibsen began to flutter the London dovecots, and every one was violently either an Ibsenite or an anti-Ibsenite, and much that was foolish was loudly said by each of the two sects."[1] Thus wrote Max Beerbohm in 1907. The purpose of this chapter will be to examine critically the effects of the Norwegian playwright upon British drama as viewed by the writers of The Theatre magazine.

W. A. Lewis Bettany in an essay on "Criticism and the Renascent Drama" appearing in the June, 1892, issue, described the worsening relations between the critics of the Old and the New schools at that time. Said Bettany:

> The events of the past three years have tended to make the struggle much more bitter and much more personal. Ibsen has been thrown like an apple of discord among the critics; the ground of action has been extended, and over every important new play the battle has been fiercely renewed . . . .
>
> (June, 1892, 278)

Reference has been made in a previous chapter to the perceptible numerical growth of the New Critics after the production of Ibsen's A Doll's House in 1889. Hence, upon the presumption that the year 1888 was a typical pre-Ibsen year, a survey of that year's dramatic

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[1]Max Beerbohm, Around Theatres (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 449.

menu might prove highly illuminating.

In 1888 approximately two hundred and sixty-four productions--exclusive of the annual Christmas pantomimes, musical comedies, and comic operas--were given. Of that number, at least seventy-five might be classed as revivals of previous productions. Included in this number were: a matinee production of Hamlet; The Ticket-of-Leave Man, by Tom Taylor; Darby and Joan, by Bellingham and Best; The School for Scandal; Lady of Lyons, by Bulwer Lytton; David Garrick, by T. W. Robertson; a matinee production of Macbeth; The Taming of the Shrew; The Squire, by A. W. Pinero; Shadows of a Great City, by Joseph Jefferson and L. R. Shewell; Don Juan Junior, billed as an "Eastern extravaganza, written up to date," by Robert Reece and Edward Righton; As You Like It; The Real Little Lord Fauntleroy, by Mrs. Hodgson Burnett; East Lynne, by Mrs. Henry Wood; Broken Hearts, a "fairy play," by W. S. Gilbert; Masks and Faces, by Charles Reade and Tom Taylor; another production of Macbeth; and A Scrap of Paper, by J. Palgrave Simpson.

There were approximately forty-six "new" or "new and original" productions exclusive of one-act plays. Among these might be listed the following: Partners, a "new comedy-drama," by Robert Buchanan; Incognito, a "new play," by Hamilton Aïdé; Fascination, a "new and improbable comedy," by Harriett Jay and Robert Buchanan; The Land of Gold, a "drama," by George Lander; The Don, "a new comedy," by Mr. and Mrs. Herman Merivale; Fallen among Thieves, a "new drama," by W. E. Morton; Blot in the 'Scutcheon, by Robert Browning; Sweet Lavender, an "original domestic drama," by A. W. Pinero; The Union Jack, a "new and

original drama," by Sydney Grundy and Henry Pettit; The Celebrated Case, "'specially designed and written for J. A. Hovell's First Annual Dramatic Cosaque,'" by Alfred Arthur; Brantingame Hall, a "new and original drama in 4 acts," by W. S. Gilbert; and Pity is Akin to Love [sic], "an unfinished sketch," by Jerome K. Jerome.

Thirty-three one-act plays were given in 1888, most of them serving as curtain raisers. There were thirty-eight productions, including matinees and revivals, which were either translations or adaptations of foreign works, usually taken from the French. Not one was taken from Ibsen. There were thirteen productions based upon novels and short stories. Among these might be cited two verions by two different authors of Scarlet Letter, both based on Hawthorne's famous story. Similarly there were two productions of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, both based upon Stevenson's famous story, and two different versions of Little Lord Fauntleroy, one of which was by the author of the original novel. There were twenty-four matinees, some given for copyright purposes or for benefits. All of these twenty-four matinees were either "new" or "new and original" productions, since matinee performances of adaptations and revivals were listed in those categories. In addition, eight comediettas, eleven farces, and four burlesques or "travesties" were produced in 1888.

From the survey above, it can be seen that there was comparatively little original writing of plays with two acts or more; the majority of the dramatists seemed to remain content with making adaptations from foreign plays, well known novels, or short stories, or with writing one-act curtain raisers which were not highly regarded even

in their day. Moreover, the fact that the managers had to resort to seventy-five revivals--exclusive of those based upon foreign sources--is a significant indication of insufficient fresh work to supply the demand. Then, too, some of the "new" or "new and original" productions which had more than one act were special performances. An example was the Browning Society's production of Blot in the 'Scutcheon.

The information for the count taken above was obtained from the monthly list of "new plays produced, and important revivals, in London," published in Our Omnibus-Box. Our Play-Box during the year 1888 carried reviews of only those plays considered "important" enough to merit more than passing notice. When a survey of the reviews in Our Play-Box is made, it is discovered that approximately eighty-six pieces--again excluding musical productions and pantomimes--were thought sufficiently worthy to receive attention. These eighty-six included revivals, adaptations, and "new" or "new and original" plays. Upon closer examination, however, some of the pieces billed by their authors as "new" turned out to be founded upon French or other sources. Hence the total for original work can be reduced somewhat further. The reviews consisted largely of detailed synopses of the plot, not excluding the ending, plus a short critique of individual performances. The manner in which the audience received the play was usually mentioned. Generally speaking it can be said that the audiences of 1888 expected their heroes to be stalwart and manly, their heroines to be sweet and pure, and their plots to have happy endings. It was imperative that the good should triumph over the bad, and that crime should not pay. When possible the forces of good should effect a miraculous regeneration of the bad forces, provided that the latter had displayed a

dormant seed or two of the redeemable. Finch's statements about mid-Victorian works are pertinent:

> Mid-Victorian drama bore the marks of the rather pious Victorian optimism. . . . Dozens of plays dealt with the regeneration theme just as twentieth-century theatre, perhaps in reaction, has been preoccupied with degeneration.[2]

Reviews of plays in 1888 give ample indications that "pious Victorian optimism" still reigned supreme. Consider the impassioned statements of Clement Scott in a paper entitled "Why Do We Go to the Play?"

> . . . We contend that it is grossly unfair and ungenerous to use the publicity, the interest, and the attraction of the drama to degrade our social system, to ridicule our men, and to despise our women. Bad as society may be, in its very worst phase, there is not one weak woman in it who has failed to obtain the influence of an upright man; there is not one vicious man who has never been checked by the example, and loving tenderness, of some pure woman. The dramatist who trumpets forth the bad, and conceals the good, is unworthy of his calling. The play that belittles and degrades the manhood, and the womanhood, of those who watch it is unworthy of public recognition.
> (March, 1888, 123)

Here Scott's reasoning might justifiably be likened to that of the small child, who frightened by the bogey-man, hopes against hope that if he closes his eyes, the object of his fears will disappear. Thus Scott propounds the following credo for the drama:

> When I am asked "why do we go to the play," I should answer thus: Not to enjoy the contemplation of the baseness, and brutality, of life; not to return to our daily work more discontented, more dissatisfied, more heartless, but to believe in hope, in faith, in purity, in honour,

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[2]Ernest Bliss Finch, "The Mid-Victorian Theatre as Seen by Its Critics 1850-1870" (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cornell University, 1951), p. 578.

> in nobility of aim and steadfastness of purpose. We must enforce the good, without showing the bad; we cannot arrive at a moral, without telling a story. . . . The general public does believe in the moral purpose of a play, ... The best play to satisfy the public and to emphasise the value of public morality is not the play of pure pessimism or pure optimism, but of decent faith and submissive hope. . . . good or bad, "we always may be what we might have been." This sentiment is the anchor of the earnest dramatist. Take the good with the bad, the vicious with the virtuous, we are all sorely tried and we can all hope for mercy through repentance, for forgiveness through regret!
>
> (March, 1888, 124)

However, H. Barton Baker, a contemporary of Scott's, took quite a different point of view of the drama of 1888.

> Whether the dearth of plays arises from a lack of discrimination in managers or from real barrenness in that field of art is a subject too thickly studded with pros and cons to be dealt with here. There is much to be said in defence of the managers; . . . few will be prepared to deny that the intellectual tendencies of the age are all towards the narrative and psychological form of literature and minute analysis of character, all of which are at opposite poles to the dramatic. Again, while the novelist has contrived to free himself from the fetters of Mrs. Grundy and take up any subject that suits his humour, the dramatist is still bound hard and fast by the prudery and conventional morality of the British matron; though why it should be less harmful to read doubtful stories than to see them acted is one of those curious contradictions that only an age which has tolerated a nude ballet yet shrinks from words that their mothers used in common conversation can reconcile. Had Shakespeare and his associates been compelled to write under such conditions we should have had no Elizabethan drama nor any other drama.[3]

Here is a writer who seemed prepared to accept a new departure in dramatic writing. According to Baker, the public was becoming increasingly weary of the monotonous array of stale pieces.

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[3]H. Barton Baker, The London Stage: Its History and Traditions from 1576 to 1888 (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1889), II, 302-303.

> It would be difficult at the present day to say what dramatic form is highly popular; the sensational is worn threadbare . . .; the interest in opera bouffe is more than languid; adaptations from the French are monotonously alike, and farcical comedy is on its last legs; not that people do not still flock to see these things, but only for the want of something fresh. Any real revival of the poetical drama, beyond making it a medium for the scene painter and the costumier, at present is out of the question, as both actors and audiences are utterly out of harmony with it.[4]

Yet, Baker declared that the situation he had just described was much improved over that of twenty or even fifteen years earlier.

Baker did not know at the time he wrote that the social dramas of Henrik Ibsen were to be introduced in the following year, and their effects would be far-reaching. The momentous event was to take place on June 7, 1889, and the play was to be A Doll's House, as translated by William Archer.

Even before 1889, British audiences had witnessed versions of two Ibsen plays. The first had been "an adaptation" of Pillars of Society by William Archer, which was re-entitled Quicksands. This version of the play had been given in mid-December, 1880. Judging from the synopsis of the plot given in the notice of the play, the adapter clung faithfully to Ibsen's version, except that at the end Bernick announced that he would go to another country to seek a fresh start. The adapter had also changed the name of the jerry-repaired ship from "Indian Girl" to "Florida." Most of the unsigned review was devoted to details of the plot, but the critic did express his feeling that Bernick's "cold-blooded villany" [sic] had been "somewhat

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[4]Ibid., p. 303.

inadequately punished." It was added that the play was "tentatively produced and fairly successful." (February, 1881, 105)

The second adaptation of an Ibsen play was made by Henry Arthur Jones and H. Herman, who based their piece, Breaking a Butterfly, upon Nora, a less common name in England for A Doll's House. The play was reviewed for The Theatre by William Archer, who termed the adaptation "certainly not a great play," but stated in unequivocal terms that the original was "very great," and the character of Nora as conceived by Ibsen had had "sheer warm-blooded vitality." Yet the two adapters had mangled the play almost beyond recognition, partly in order to make it acceptable to the British playgoer.

> Take a piece of music, omit all the harmonies, break up and rearrange the melodic phrases, and then play them with your forefinger on the pianoforte--do this, and you will have some idea of the process to which Messrs. Jones and Herman have subjected "A Doll's House." The mere theatrical action of Ibsen's play bears to its social and moral significance the relation of a melody to its supporting harmonies. No one is a greater master than he of the theatrical counterpoint, so to speak, which develops every detail of plot and character from an underlying ethical "plain-song," and so gives it symbolic generality in addition to its individual truth. It is this combination of moralist--or "immoralist," as some would prefer to say--with the dramatic poet which has given Ibsen his enormous influence in the three Scandinavian kingdoms; and it is this which makes his plays suffer more than any others by transportation across the Channel. For the British public will not have didactics at any price, and least of all such didactics as Ibsen's.
>
> (April, 1884, 209)

Archer then gave an account of Ibsen's abandonment of the poetic drama for the social drama. Here Archer digressed to discuss his own version of the first of these, viz., Pillars of Society, which he described not as an adaptation, but "a slightly condensed translation." He stated

that it had been presented at a morning performance, and had "failed to make an impression." "Nevertheless," he commented, "the play, though not in itself such a remarkable work as 'A Doll's House,' is probably much better fitted for the English stage, and had I had the courage (or audacity) to adapt instead of translating it, and to transfer the action to England, the result might have been different."

Getting back to 1889 and A Doll's House, Archer told his readers about the "electrical" success the play had had in all Scandinavia and in Warsaw and Berlin, although the German version had acceded to the audience's demands that Nora return to her husband and family at the end. Archer thought Miss Frances Lord's English translation the best available at the time. He called it "a conscientious piece of work, but heavy and not always accurate."

After describing the plot and significance of the original A Doll's House, the reviewer summed it up as "a plea for woman's rights--not for her right to vote and prescribe medicine, but for her right to exist as a responsible member of society,'a being breathing thoughtful breath,' the complement and equal of man."

Archer disclosed that the adapters had made some extraordinary deletions and additions in order to make the play palatable for their audience. The three children and Dr. Rank were omitted entirely, and Mrs. Linde was replaced by "Martin Grittle, a virtuous book-keeper." A few extra characters had been added, and Krogstad had been transformed from a "cynical social pariah," into a much more conventional type of villain. Nora, re-christened Flora Goddard, was made a mere "butterfly wife," and did not deviate from her pattern at all during the play. The character of her husband, now named Humphrey Goddard, was so changed

that Ibsen's intent had been utterly obliterated.

> The heroic Goddard does the very thing which Nora in her romantic imaginings had expected Helmer to do. He accuses himself of the forgery, and so makes matters a hundred times worse. A forgery committed by a thoughtless and inexperienced girl, without the smallest criminal intent and in the full belief that her father . . . would ratify the signature, is a much less serious matter than the like fault committed by an experienced man of business without the like excuses. . . . Thus the adapters gain a sympathetic character and a telling situation by flying in the face, not only of Ibsen, but of probability and common sense.
>
> (April, 1884, 214)

Archer reiterated his belief that the adapters were not to be blamed for making the play "sympathetic" and therefore less pointed. "Ibsen on the English stage is impossible." But he emphasized that the audience must not judge Ibsen's masterpiece by the English version just seen.

> All that I wish to point out is that the expression of the playbill . . . would be more exact if it read "founded on the ruins of Ibsen's 'Nora!'" Let the little play be judged on its own merits, which are not few; but let it not be supposed to give the faintest idea of Ibsen's great "Et Dukkehjem."
>
> (April, 1884, 214)

Archer concluded his review with the information that he had recently seen a performance of Ghosts, apparently on the continent, and that he had "never experienced an intenser sensation within the walls of a theatre." The unusual experience had convinced the writer that "modern tragedy in the deepest sense of the word" was possible, even if not in the English theatres.

In the following year Archer gave his idea of the "best" play.

> To my mind, . . . "what is best" is a play in which a serious moral problem is seriously handled; and from this the public would shrink as from a visit to

> the dentist's. We are not yet within a measurable distance of an ethical drama--a drama which shall be an efficient factor in the spiritual life of the nation.
>
> (June, 1885, 272)

Yet, declared Archer, the public had made some advances in dramatic taste. British audiences, no longer satisfied with the well-made play, now seemed to demand a more faithful observation and depiction of life from their dramatists. Archer was even optimistic enough to believe that sometime in the future playgoers would welcome the "ethical drama."

> Observation!--is not that the first and last word of the serious modern drama? Truth--not the whole truth, but a certain part of the truth--is not that what interests the public, and what it really demands? . . . A drama in which "judgments" and "ideals" shall be embodied may develop itself later on. In the meantime the public is satisfied with pictures of life and character, selected so as to suggest no very inflammatory topics, yet faithful as far as they go; and the day will soon come when, in work pretending to be serious, the public will be satisfied with nothing short of this.
>
> (June, 1885, 274)

Four years later, the time had apparently arrived for an attempt to give the public an undiluted--so to speak--version of Ibsen's A Doll's House. On the aforesaid evening of June 7, 1889, William Archer's translation of A Doll's House was presented at the Novelty Theatre, with Herbert Waring as Torvald Helmer and Janet Achurch as Nora. R. K. Hervey, who reviewed the piece for Our Play-Box, gave the play a most sympathetic writeup. He found it necessary, however, to preface his remarks about the play with a lengthy discussion on the Norwegian character, in part as follows:

> To understand Henrik Ibsen's plays it is necessary to take into account the nature of the country of

> which he is one of the most distinguished sons. It is a land of striking contrasts. . . . It is the country of legend, where the supernatural enters deeply into the beliefs of the uncultured, and tinges at least those of the educated. It is the home of a daring and unconquered race, where personal liberty has reigned throughout untold ages. . . . What wonder that, in such a land, the ideas of change, of development, of progress, which are in the air, should assume a somewhat different form from that which they wear elsewhere, and that poets and preachers should arise who clothe the doctrines they teach in forms which to the dwellers in other climes seem to border on the extravagant.
>
> (July, 1889, 39)

Accordingly, Hervey characterized the Norwegian playwright in these words: "Ibsen is essentially a democrat of the modern school, a man who believes that the old society is played out, . . . and that the shams and lies and conventionalities upon which the relations of man to man, and more especially of man to woman, have hitherto been based upon must be swept away with a ruthless hand." Moreover, the critic clearly indicated that he understood the dissatisfactions of the woman of his century for whom Ibsen had "made himself the mouthpiece." As the reviewer saw it, Nora Helmer, the heroine of A Doll's House, was a symbol of contemporary women "in some degree." Nor did he fail to perceive the basis for Nora's departure from home at the end of the play.

> He [Helmer] will take back to his heart the woman whom but a few moments before he had denounced as infamous, and as unfit to associate with her children. But the wife's eyes are opened; her love is dead; the golden god of her idolatry has turned out a miserable image of worthless clay, and she leaves it, abandoning everything--children, husband, and home.
>
> (July, 1889, 40)

Hervey admired the playwright's depiction of the characters, not to mention the actors' interpretation of them. In conclusion, he approved

highly of Archer's translation, the stage management, and the mounting. The piece was reported to have been received "with the greatest favour by a most attentive audience."

This number of The Theatre also reprinted a review of the same production written by "C.S."--Clement Scott--for the Daily Telegraph. Scott proclaimed that "there are already signs of weakness in the over-vaunted Ibsen cause." The critic had little sympathy for and even less understanding of Nora. In fact, he regarded all of the characters as utterly ignoble--"men without conscience and women without affection, an unloveable [sic], unlovely, and detestable crew." As for the ending, Scott could not accept Nora's "unlovely, selfish creed."

> Helmer's attitude towards his child-wife is natural but unreasonable. Nora's conduct towards her husband, when the forged bill has been returned, and he has apologised for his impetuosity, is both unreasonable and unnatural. Here is embodied the germ of the Ibsen creed; here we have the first fruits of the "new gospel," the marvellous philosophical revelation that is to alter the order of our dramatic literature; . . . .
>
> (July, 1889, 20)

More, Ibsen had perpetrated other offenses, "not to be readily forgiven."

> Dr. Rank, with his nasty conversation, his medical theories, and his ill-judged discussions can hardly pass. But what are we to say of Ibsen's Nora--foolish, fitful, conceited, selfish, and unloveable [sic] Nora--who is to drive from the stage the loving and noble heroines who have adorned it and filled all hearts with admiration from the time of Shakespeare to the time of Pinero?
>
> (July, 1889, 21-22)

Hervey, it will be recalled, had declared that the audience at the Novelty Theatre had given the play its approval. Scott painted quite a different picture of the London patrons: "And as yet the English

public has said no word, except to sit with open-mouthed astonishment at the Ibsen stage, and to try to feel that good acting wholly atones for false sentiment."

Scott's failure to appreciate Nora's motives perhaps explains the need for the nineteenth century New Woman Movement. It is precisely because there were so many nineteenth century men like Scott, that finally their wives and daughters rose up in rebellion. Scott claimed that Nora was "the child of a fraudulent father, . . . bred in an atmosphere of lovelessness, who has had no one to influence her in her girlhood's days for good." In his opinion, Nora, having married Helmer of her own free will, must bear the consequences of her choice. Nor could he see how a desperate woman in a moment of stress could forge her father's signature--to save her husband, be it noted. Yet the critic had already described what he considered to be Nora's unwholesome background. He had pointed out that Nora's husband regarded her as a virtual plaything, but still the critic expected this wife to be "the fountain of love and forgiveness and charity."

In the same year--1889--a paper contributed by R. Farquharson Sharp seriously questioned the artistic value of Ibsen's use of the drama to raise social questions. The author, however, based his comments upon four Ibsen plays--The Pillars of Society, A Doll's House, Ghosts, and An Enemy of the People--as read in book form, not as acted upon the stage. Sharp made it clear that he was not opposed to the discussion of social and ethical questions per se, but he thought that the novel "or a certain branch of the family" was the better medium for developing such issues.

> . . . It is necessary that the reader or spectator should be able closely to follow the activity of the minds of the characters portrayed; for in all such cases deliberative motive and personal reflection must be the main springs of the action of the story, and these must be patent if the lesson is to be clearly taught. . . . But this end is only to be fully obtained in a novel by a prolixity of description which in a play is impossible, and by those records of personal deliberation for which in a play there is but little place.
>
> (February, 1889, 76)

Moreover, the writer believed that the true-to-life approach required by the social drama would lower the artistic value therein. Then, again, the author feared public disapprobation of this particular method of inculcating moral and social ethics. "It is hard to believe that there would not be felt a sense of the unwieldiness as well as the unfitness of the drama as a means of social teaching."

Turning his attention to the plays themselves, Sharp expressed his conviction that Nora or A Doll's House was "considerably the most dramatic of the four." Though he found Ghosts to be "intensely dramatic" in certain incidents, he thought it "as a whole . . . less perfect in construction than Nora." An Enemy of the People he rated as even "less dramatic still," and he thought that parts of it would be tedious on the stage. Sharp's thesis was that the more interested Ibsen became in setting forth social issues, the less artistic and dramatic he became. Thus he found Pillars of Society to contain too much dialogue "for dramatic purposes." Ghosts he found objectionable on a number of counts. He thought Pastor Manders would be "tedious" and that audiences could not remain interested throughout.

> Intensely, terribly dramatic it certainly is, and illustrates its lesson with fearful force; but it is repulsive as the theme of a drama for the stage, and an offense against good taste in dramatic art.
>
> (February, 1889, 79)

In An Enemy of the People Sharp believed that Ibsen had sacrificed all to the character of Dr. Stockmann, but did admire the way in which the character had been drawn.

In short, Sharp was impressed with Ibsen's abilities as a dramatist, but thought that they had been perverted to the wrong ends. In Sharp's words, ". . . at the present time, when realism of every kind threatens to usurp the place of the literary and artistic qualities of the drama, all who are anxious for the future of dramatic literature will deprecate this new departure."

It is interesting to observe that The Theatre gave three widely differing, yet representative views of Ibsen in the year 1889. Hervey was strongly pro-Ibsen, Scott as violently anti-Ibsen, while Sharp might be classed as a fence-straddler, although he was probably closer to Scott than he was to Hervey.

The tentative efforts of the English dramatists, Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero, to grapple with serious themes were hailed by some critics as the beginning of a new era in playwriting. Jones' Wealth, according to an article entitled "The New Dramatic School," by "C.S.," had been widely praised; so, too, had Pinero's The Profligate. "C.S." did not see anything startlingly new in these plays and in refutation, submitted a reprinting of some remarks on the subject that he had made "elsewhere." Of Wealth he had this to say:

> ". . . For the life of me, I cannot see the use of raising these 'cuckoo cries' about philosophy and new formulas, and so on, when there is nothing whatever to justify them. . . . Where on earth can any one [sic] discover the root or basis or even the faintest foreshadowing of a grave social problem in the story, the idea, or in any of the characters introduced into the play? . . .

> . . . But if the new departure, and the social problems, and the psychology, and all the fine new terms and phrases are to bring back dulness sublimated--well, then, for goodness' sake let us see a fine and intelligent young actor like Mr. Beerbohm Tree as Sir Giles Overreach. . . . for assuredly neither Massinger nor Colman nor Lord Byron wrote quite so monotonous a study of an old gentleman as Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has done."
> (June, 1889, 321)

According to the writer, the audience had seemed "'to sigh for interest.'"

Turning his attention to The Profligate, "C.S." thought the play a fine one, but professed to see nothing "'so very strange and wonderful in the ethics of the new play.'" However, "C.S." appended to his article a portion of a letter written by Pinero, in which the latter stated that he had softened the ending of his play so as not to unsettle his audience too much. The following is an excerpt from Pinero's letter as quoted by the magazine:

> "I had long settled the form of my play when a friend . . . raised . . . a question for my consideration. Could not the moral I had set myself to illustrate be enforced without distressing the audience by sacrificing the life of a character whose sufferings were intended to win sympathy? Reflection convinced me that such a course . . . promised to extend that story's influence over the larger body of public."
> (June, 1889, 324)

It seems apparent that the so-called new dramatists were proceeding at a cautious pace in order not to shock sensitive audiences.

A modern critic, Allardyce Nicoll, has this comment to make on Pinero's play:

> The fetters of the mid-nineteenth century still hinder his free progress to a more dominant art-form. It is typical of this mechanical structure that The Profligate (1889) was produced with a double ending, by which the curtain fell either on unmitigated tragedy or on a con-

> ventional ending where the hero is forgiven and all is well. The vicious taste of late seventeenth-century drama . . . was not lost even in 1889.[5]

London audiences had an opportunity to see Ibsen's The Pillars of Society at a benefit matinee on July, 17, 1889. The version presented at this time was Archer's direct translation from the Norwegian rather than his "condensed translation," previously presented as Quicksands. R. K. Hervey once more gave an enthusiastic review. He described the situations in the play as typical of those to be found in the English provinces and in many foreign towns. After giving a prolonged recital of the plot, Hervey pronounced his judgement on the play. As far as he was concerned, the play was not excessively discursive--Sharp to the contrary.

> It is impossible in a short article to do justice to this remarkable play, in which Ibsen pours out his withering satire upon the lies and conventionalities of society. Not a line is inserted without a reason. All the characters are drawn with a master hand. Admirable as is the comedy vein of many of the scenes, the tragedy of others is no less admirable. Bernick's unconscious revelations of selfishness are marvellously true to nature. . . .
>
> (August, 1889, 96)

Hervey closed with a critique of the individual performers, all of whom seem to have acquitted themselves in commendable fashion.

In March, 1890, Magdalen Brooke deplored the rise of what she termed "the realist and impressionist in literature and art." The

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[5]Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama: An Historical Survey from the Beginnings to the Present Time (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1933), Revised edition, p. 363.

writer's grouping together of two such divergent trends is curious, but she claimed to find their common denominator in their reeking of the "dustbin." While she conceded that in the course of rummaging through the "unsavoury contents" of such a receptacle one might perchance find something rewarding, she thought that there was "danger" in "revelling in the dust itself."

> . . . A too constant dwelling on the darker side--an uninterrupted study of vice and the lower instincts of humanity--has a tendency in many minds not so much to cause a revolt against the unwholesome diet as to produce a relaxing of the moral fibre, a tolerance not only of the criminal but of the crime, as well as a confusion of the moral sense . . . .
> (March, 1890, 141)

Miss Brooke, however, failed to name the specific "dustbin"-wallowers, although the indications are that in referring to "realism" she had the Ibsenites in mind.

In December of that same year Clement Scott also expressed his fears at the new direction toward which the drama seemed to be veering. Said Scott:

> All, who take a sincere interest in the drama, must have observed, with something like alarm, a tendency in recent years to make the stage a pulpit and a platform instead of a place of legitimate and general amusement. It is assumed on very insufficient evidence that literature is divorced from the drama. . . . The superfine young gentlemen of to-day [sic] try to din into our ears that our dramatic system is all wrong, that conventionality is throttling the poor old drama, that all our plays are constructed, and arranged, on a false system, and that the day of a dramatic revolution is at hand.
> (December, 1890, 261)

In March, 1891, Our Omnibus-Box spoke with considerable alarm of the "gruesome drama according to Ibsen, whose 'cult' would seem, for the moment, to be in the ascendant." Ghosts, it was reported, had recently risen to prominence on the continent, but the Omnibus-Box could

not understand "the rage for this dramatisation of disease" at all. Ghosts was further described as "nauseous" and moreover, "untrue to art and to fact." The Omnibus-Box pointed out that it was likely that most people were not aware of the "principals [sic] of heredity," which were only then beginning to be understood, "even by experts." In hinting at the possible invalidity of Ibsen's theory of heredity, the Omnibus-Box was on firm ground, but it apparently failed to grasp Ibsen's principal thesis--the predicament of a woman who, unlike the much criticized Nora, chose to stick to her marital guns, so to speak. For Mrs. Alving and the other characters the writer showed little regard and no sympathy.

> What would be said if an English playwright were to people his composition with such a gang of good-for-nothings as those which infest the cheerful pages of "Ghosts"? Of the five characters one only is even decently acceptable, the unfortunate mother, with such a delightfully unconventional absence of prejudice in the matter of incest and what we should consider the sanctities of home life.
>
> (March, 1891, 167)

Commenting on Ibsen himself, Our Omnibus-Box acknowledged the playwright's dramatic power, but advocated that his plays be not staged in Britain. "He cannot be said to entertain," the Box argued, "and most people, in their unrelieved darkness, will deny that he edifies." Indeed, according to the Box, there was the distinct possibility that the repulsiveness of the Ibsen drama might drive the audience away from the theatre. If one wants to educate audiences, then one must do it in a pleasant manner. It was conceded that for some, the Norwegian "'Master'" had an inordinate allure:

> There are those whom we call Ibsenites, but since they are of the Inner Brotherhood, it must be assumed that they are converted, and not in want of the Master's

> ministrations. Then there are those for whom dirt of all kinds, and particularly sordid dirt, will always possess an irresistible fascination, and these, we fear, are beyond hope.
>
> (March, 1891, 166)

Could those who thought that Ibsen was "sordid" or "dirty" have failed to see that the dramatist might not have presented the unpleasant for the sake of creating a sensation, but only in order to expound his theses? Perhaps if Ibsen had chosen to make his points more gently and delicately, he might not have touched his audience at all.

Despite the protests of Our Omnibus-Box, however, two Ibsen plays were produced in the following month, Rosmersholm and the despised Ghosts. The unsigned notice of Rosmersholm began with the reviewer's frank statement of his own confusion:

> Those of the audience who could honestly say that they fathomed the motives which induced the extraordinary conduct of Pastor Rosmer and Rebecca West, must have been of no ordinary capacity; even a close study of Ibsen could hardly have enlightened them. Here is a woman, basely born, who, through being allowed to run wild and read all sorts of books, has become a freethinker and an "emancipist."
>
> (April, 1891, 196)

Ghosts fared even less well at the hands of its critic, again anonymous. The critic rightly pointed out that the play was weak in its treatment of the genetics question, but he could not understand the idea Ibsen was attempting to set forth. The plot was pronounced "too horrible and too terrible" to describe in full. Those wishing "its dreadful details" were advised to look them up. The reviewer was horror stricken that such a piece had been produced before "a mixed audience."

> And with all its loathsomeness there is drawn an awful picture of the consequences of abusing the "joy of life"--Ibsen's theme; but that such a play could ever be produced before a mixed audience is, in this country, an utter impossibility.
> (April, 1891, 205)

Since this production was the opening presentation of J. T. Grein's Independent Theatre, the critic had troubled himself to list the cast, together with "this short notice" merely for the sake of "historical record." In conclusion the critic urged Grein to produce "a healthy play of Ibsen's," the better to provide the opportunity of judging the Norwegian "without reservation," so as to determine "whether he is entitled to the exalted position his admirers claim for him."

It would be interesting to know whether the writer of Our Omnibus-Box and the reviewer of Ghosts were one and the same person. If so, the play had probably already been pre-judged and could hardly claim to have been fairly evaluated.

In the same month--April--Our Omnibus-Box waxed even more furiously eloquent upon the "foulness" of Ghosts. It urged all "conscientious" critics to band together to "proclaim in unequivocal and unmistakeable [sic] terms its absolute unfitness for representation in a mixed company of decent people." The Box thereupon gave a prolonged disquisition to prove "how loathsome, monstrous, and unnatural" the work was. According to the Box, the discussion between Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving about "Ideals and Duty, both carefully distinguished by capital initials" had been "incomprehensible, not to say Pharisaical." Having missed the point completely, the Box quite naturally could see nothing but "unmitigated dirt" in the whole conversation. Manders himself was interpreted as "clearly a clerical Aunt Sally, put

up by the author to be knocked down by the author's anti-clerical stick, none too deftly thrown by the way."

Glowing hotly with indignation the Box thought it saw dangerous and ominous tendencies in the willingness of the Ibsenites to espouse the cause of the Norwegian dramatist.

> . . . The work itself is filthy, and it is not a play. . . . But it is a matter of concern to all of us, whether we hold dramatic art in high esteem or not, for it is a question of far wider significance than that, that we should have amongst us a body of active and intelligent men--and women (more's the shame) who are trying to foist upon us a leprous distilment of this kind in the name of Dramatic Art. . . . when, in fact, it is sought to bring the cesspool and the infectious diseases wards of the hospital, the madhouse, and the lazaretto into the amusements of our people . . . it is time for every man with the interest, not only of the drama, but of every form of wholesome public amusement at heart, to protest with all his might and main.
>
> (April, 1891, 221)

In April, 1891, Hedda Gabler[6] was produced at the Vaudeville Theatre. Once more the reviewer confessed himself bewildered. He admitted that he was at a loss to find the motive of the play.

> The initiated, or those who fancy they are, may discover hidden meaning in the "Master's" work, and may be able to understand what moral he teaches in the conduct of his heroine, but I must confess I can only see in her a spiteful, blasée woman, none too virtuous, of ill-regulated mind, and deceitful. What has made her exist without one redeeming characteristic? What is it wearies her of her life and makes her take it? What but petty jealousy makes her drive a man back into his former fallen state, and ultimately herself commit suicide? To me she is simply incomprehensible and repugnant, and yet I have read Mr. Edmund Gosse's translation carefully three times.
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> (May, 1891, 257)

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[6]Book reviews of Hedda Gabler and of Emperor and Galilean, a World-Historic Drama, appeared in The Theatre, March, 1891, pp. 170-171.

The reviewer acknowledged that the audience, composed mainly of Ibsenites, "appeared interested"--even those not completely won over to the Norwegian's cause. He praised the acting, declaring that its excellence had really saved the play from seeming "ludicrous."

In the following month The Lady from the Sea,[7] translated by Eleanor Marx Aveling, was produced at Terry's Theatre. The critic expressed his "disappointment" that on the stage the play had been the least effective of all the Ibsen plays thus far. As a play to be read, he declared, The Lady from the Sea was "poetic, imaginative, and interesting." In the critic's estimation, the piece had seemed "to endeavour to inculcate that perfect freedom will enable woman to resist phantasies and listen to the dictates of common sense, whereas so long as she is fettered by conventional rules and customs, she will be a slave to her fancies and act in defiance of all moral law." Obviously, the symbolism had escaped the understanding of the writer, and yet he had comprehended the principal point, generally speaking. With regard to Ellida's "defiance of all moral law" one wishes the reviewer had made his idea of that a bit clearer. (June, 1891, 306-307)

In July, 1891, a performance of A Doll's House with a different cast from that of the first, was reviewed in Our Play-Box.[8] No comments were made on the play, but one gathers from the remarks on the acting, that the second cast had not done as well as the first.

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[7]For a book review of the same play consult The Theatre, February, 1890, pp. 125-126.

[8]A third performance of A Doll's House was given in 1893. The Theatre, April, 1893, p. 218. The celebrated Eleonora Duse appeared in still another production in May, 1893. See July, 1893, pp. 45-46.

In August in a critical assessment of the season just completed, William Davenport Adams paid a grateful tribute to Ibsen. Observing that four Ibsen plays had been staged for the first time during the past year, Davenport expressed himself as follows:

> We owe, we think, much gratitude to the enthusiastic souls by whom these performances were promoted and carried through. Mr. Grein has been assailed with a bitterness amounting to persecution, but it is certain, all the same, that even those who have attacked him have been glad of the opportunity of seeing "Ghosts." Glad, too, have many of us been to make acquaintance with stage representations of "Rosmersholm" and "The Lady from the Sea," though we should have been more grateful had these representations been adequate.
> (August, 1891, 58)

The writer was convinced that Ibsen's work required topnotch acting, and found the performance of Hedda Gabler praiseworthy in this respect. He concluded with his belief that Ibsen would have no "permanent position" on the London stage, but that "his subjects and his methods will help to revolutionise" the British theatre, signs of which--in "freshness of topic and treatment"--were already perceptible.

A book review of The Life of Henrik Ibsen by Henrik Jaeger also indicated a less impassioned and less vituperative attitude toward Ibsen. The reviewer was no Ibsenite, but he could not bring himself to deny Ibsen's sincerity.

> To deny the force of such a character is quite impossible. Rightly or wrongly he is working against fearful odds for what he believes the truth. Even were his literary achievements confined to polemical essays, in denunciation of the diseases of the body politic in his own little state, his powers would claim for him wide notoriety, but they are greater than these. Condemned or approved, his dramas do what they profess to do, deal bitterly with that social "morality" which too often is found wanting. "Truth, liberty, and love," his biographer says,

> "are the corner stones of the grand and solemn fabric which Ibsen has constructed in the course of years." With that we cannot agree, but this book proves the man honest, evil counsellor though he be.
> (August, 1891, 77)

The review terminated with the significant notation that "much misunderstanding" will be cleared up before the reader has read the book all the way through.

The Theatre returned to its more virulent anti-Ibsen groove in December, 1891. G. W. Dancy declared himself unable to credit William Archer's assertion that Nora Helmer and Hedda Gabler would be "as generally understood" in the future as Jane Eyre or Becky Sharp. And the contributor thought that the short runs the Ibsen plays had enjoyed were cause for the Ibsenites' self-congratulation. He acknowledged that the original English Nora, Janet Achurch, had had to leave for an engagement overseas, but he reasoned--one might add illogically--that this was proof that "the excellence was in the actress rather than in the play, or it need not have been difficult to find another lady sufficiently gifted to give great vitality to Nora." Dancy assured Archer that the "'intellectual ferment'" claimed by the latter as the outcome of the production of A Doll's House was "certainly not a healthy one." Regarding Archer's objections to the "malignant" opposition to the Independent Theatre and its founder, J. T. Grein, Dancy had this defense for the opposition:

> . . . It must be remembered that something more than dramatic convention was attacked. A determined attempt was made to introduce upon our stage for more or less public representation, a class of works which the prejudices, as some might call them, . . . of the bulk of the intelligent and respectable people in this country

> had previously banished from the stage. . . . If people thought that the introduction of works they held in abhorrence for their immoral tendency was seriously contemplated, it was their duty to take all fair means in their power to stop what to them must have appeared a public scandal.
> (December, 1891, 264)

An observation in Notes of the Month in September, 1892, however, seems to suggest an inconsistent attitude on the part of British audiences:

> What may or may not be treated on the stage is still a moot point. Lady Teazle may venture to the rooms of Mr. Surface and have her gown handled with an open suggestion of indelicacy, and not a soul will but smugly applaud; but if Dr. Rank refers in a meaning voice to some stockings belonging to Mrs. Helmer, outraged indeed are the virtuous.
> (September, 1892, 128)

An article appearing in the March, 1892, number, offered a striking contrast to Dancy's attitudes. The author, J. D. Hunting, stated that the playgoers of the day had turned away from artifice in drama to "more subtle realism." The writer pointed out that audiences go to the theatre, not to escape from reality, but to "confirm" their impressions of it. In appraising the recently successful production of The Dancing Girl, by Henry Arthur Jones, Miss Hunting thought its "most arresting quality" had been the "moral relationship of the hero with the two women who figure as heroines." It was Jones' unconventional--by stage standards--treatment of the two women which was unique.

> The touch of cynicism in "Midge" and of scorn in Drusilla could scarcely have been depicted in a "Comedy of Manners" in any age previous to this one. It would not have been possible until within the last few years to create two such women in a play dealing with "the great world of artificial society."
> (March, 1892, 124)

However, Miss Hunting did not think that Jones had followed through in his characterization of "Midge," for in the fourth act "Midge" became "a _redivivus_ [_sic_] of the simpering heroine of a last century comedy." Miss Hunting was hopeful that the future would bring with it plays which would deal with the great new theme now available to them--the emergence of the new woman.

> The great awakening of the soul of woman is the most portentous social event of the closing years of the present century. Both on and off the stage it is giving rise to many new and dramatic situations. And the playwrights, whose work will be regarded by posterity as the best dramatic products of the age we live in, will be those who seize upon these situations, and who portray with greatest force some of the distinctest features of this great awakening.
>
> (March, 1892, 125)

The writer concluded with a plea that the theatre appeal also to the "moral or psychical sense" of its audience.

In 1892 the performances of Ibsen fell off considerably, the only production being an adaptation of _Rosmersholm_ by Austin Fryers, entitled _Beata_. The reviewer contented himself with the far from adequate remark that the adapter had "written a fairly good play, but it is a morbid study." The critic added that the story was "so well known" that it was unnecessary to retell it. It is a pity that he didn't, since one wonders what Fryers accomplished in his "revised version." (May, 1892, 257-258)

The next Ibsen play to appear on the London stage was _The Master Builder_, which was given a cursory commentary in Notes of the Month in March, 1893. It was reported that there was "no particular plot," and that the acting had been responsible for the success of the play. (March, 1893, 174)

However, in the following month a complete notice of the production was included among the Plays of the Month. The version of the piece used was the translation made by William Archer and Edmund Gosse. The reviewer again admitted that the meaning of the play had eluded him.

> What this extraordinary piece of work may mean, Dr. Ibsen alone can know. Perhaps it is an essay in Browningism, an expression of genius so perfect that everyone may find in it precisely the problem that confronts him, the solution that he seeks. There is room for a score of interpretations: . . . "Don't kiss a child of thirteen, if you're a married man, or it may end in your death." . . . Or is it that the paths of duty and ambition--typified in Mrs. Solness and her husband--lead alike to misery! . . . Or that the very pursuit of the well-beloved (as Mr. Hardy calls it) ensures destruction! . . . What is it?
>
> (April, 1893, 213)

The reviewer indicated his awareness that the play did have a hidden meaning, but left it up to each person to decide for himself what it was. There were "strong" incidents in the play, but the characters of Solness and his wife were deemed "vague, elusive, utterly wanting in sustained reality." He furnished ample proof that the character of Mrs. Solness had eluded him, when he analyzed the Solnesses as follows:

> To give his vocation as a master-builder scope he has been the means of denying her the exercise of hers--the building up of little children's souls. (In this he is quite mistaken, for the loss of her babes does not trouble her in the least. They are far happier than with her, she says, and one can readily believe it. What she does mope about, and mourn, is the loss of the laces and gowns and jewels and her nine lovely dolls in that disastrous fire. But this error is characteristic of the man.)
>
> (April, 1893, 212)

As one can plainly see, the critic did not understand the symbolism inherent in the dolls, laces, and other ornaments. The acting, in the

critic's opinion, had been remarkable and a prime factor--if not the one factor--in the play's sucess. Since a "respectful" and even "reverential" audience had given the production a cordial reception, the play was transferred to another theatre for a longer run.

An article in the same number by R. Farquharson Sharp questioned the value and appropriateness of using symbolism on the stage. Sharp maintained that an "unprejudiced spectator" at a performance of The Master Builder "would be hard put to it to say where the 'symbolism' came in, or what it signified." The same hypothetical "unprejudiced spectator" would find in the play a keen delineation of character, but the characters would not have any appeal "as symbols of anything outside themselves." According to Sharp, the closer to life the characters are, "the more the spectator will be forced to consider their speeches and actions as illustrations of character, and in no way as exemplifying any abstract or concrete external." In considering Sharp's statement one might say that he himself did not clarify his thesis satisfactorily.

However, he did make himself understandable when he contended that "the meaning of the symbol must be apparent of itself, and that the symbol must be unmistakeable [sic] as such." In The Master Builder Sharp thought that the multiplicity of interpretations clearly indicated the "failure of the symbolism to explain itself." Further, he scouted the idea of the symbolization of the various dramatic phases of Ibsen's own career reputed to be in the play. If this were true, "Ibsen the dramatist must be taking leave of his senses"--so Sharp asserted. In the light of these conditions, Sharp pronounced the use of symbolism on the stage to be inappropriate. (April, 1893,

203-206)

To a certain extent one can agree with Sharp--symbolism should be apparent in order to be effective--but by its very nature symbolism is open to variegated interpretation. A spectator derives from the symbols what he himself can see in them. If, like Sharp, one is more interested in character development as such, then there is no symbolic significance in the play, and one probably loses accordingly.

The advent of the symbolic drama continued to perplex play-lovers, if Notes of the Month may be trusted. The new type of play had even created dissension within the ranks of the Ibsenites. Two New Critics--Walkley and J. H. McCarthy--had momentarily deserted the Norwegian dramatist, having pronounced The Master Builder one of Ibsen's mistakes. Arguments were carried on in the newspapers and at a meeting of an organization known as the Playgoers' Club. (May, 1893, 296-297)

However, the "unconventional" was rapidly gaining adherents among the conventional. The same column reported that a committee was being assembled to make plans for subscription performances of Brand, Hedda Gabler, The Lady from the Sea, Rosmersholm, and The Master Builder. Among the names mentioned either as trustees or subscribers were those of Sir Frederick Pollock; The Home Secretary, Mr. Asquith; Oscar Wilde; and Sir Edward Grey. (May, 1893, 297)

In June, 1893, another production of An Enemy of the People was given, which was termed "an actor's improvement" of what Ibsen had done. The intrepid actor was Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who had given Dr. Stockmann with "frequent touches of sly humour," thus "softening . . . the hard high lights [sic] and toning . . . the deep ugly shadows." More-

over, he had changed the ending.

> So handled, the play exhales an exhilarating atmosphere. Stockmann [sic] becomes such a simple-hearted, big-souled fellow, that the history of his hopeless fight and inevitable downfall assumes the look of a political contest--in which when the fight is done, hands are shaken, ... To a certain extent, no doubt, this diminishes the tragedy of the situation. But the pathos of the honest man's defeat remains untouched, and there is wisdom in removing the problem posed from the sphere of bitter persecution.
>
> (July, 1893, 44)

What, one might ask, would Ibsen have thought of this unaccountably jolly version of his play?

The Ibsen performances mentioned earlier in the Notes of the Month got under way on May twenty-ninth. Two afternoon and two evening performances of each of the following were given--Hedda Gabler, Rosmersholm, and The Master Builder. Together with the last mentioned play, one act of Brand was presented.[9] The reviewer restricted himself to comments on the acting, giving no interpretations of the plays themselves. Neither did he report the audience's reactions. (July, 1893, 47-48)

In September, 1893, a paper on the past dramatic year by G. E. Morrison frankly acknowledged the debt English drama owed to Ibsen. The writer hailed the "production and the success" of A. W. Pinero's The Second Mrs. Tanqueray as the "two salient points of the past dramatic season." The contributor asserted that the play's outcome was "certain," largely due to Ibsen's unacknowledged conversion of English tastes in the drama.

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[9]A book review of Brand appeared in The Theatre, February, 1892, p. 94.

> The public are sick of artificiality on the stage, artificiality of character, of motive, of conduct, of circumstance, of everything. They may wince at the word "realism," but unless they can get plays true to something more than stage convention they will give up the theatre altogether. For this attitude they have, chiefly, to thank Dr. Ibsen. But they do not thank him, being too much offended at his manners. . . . Others felt defrauded. They had gone to a theatre only to find themselves in a hospital. And so Dr. Ibsen failed to get a lucrative practice of his own. But a visit to a hospital, however undertaken, deepens one's sense of life. This they discovered when they returned to their old plays. . . .
>
> (September, 1893, 134-135)

According to Morrison, Pinero had not been the first English dramatist to fall into the pattern set by Ibsen, but he had been the cleverest. He had, however, been preceded by Calmour and by Rose, who had committed the error of forgetting that "the play must be kept going, and kept going on familiar lines." It had remained for Pinero to see "the necessity of compromise," and he had made good use of "points and situations" whenever possible, without "going out of his way to beat [them] up."

The influence of the famous Norwegian dramatist upon Pinero and Jones was likewise acknowledged by Joseph Knight in a book entitled Theatrical Notes, reviewed in the January, 1894, number. "Mr. Knight," said the unknown book critic, "has not failed to notice the new influence--that of Ibsen--which, if it is not as yet far reaching upon the English stage, has perceptibly affected the work of Mr. Henry Arthur Jones only in a less degree than that of Mr. Pinero." Furthermore, the reviewer noted that Knight was "very guarded" in his judgement of Ibsen, confining himself to the assertion "that a man who can inspire such admiration and call forth such passion, and form the subject of such repeated discussion and recrimination is not a nobody."

(January, 1894, 18-20)

In December, 1893, another Englishman furnished ample evidence that the Ibsen influence was really taking hold. The Independent Theatre Society produced a play by Dr. John Todhunter, The Black Cat. Todhunter had fallen so deeply under the Norwegian's spell that he had written a more than reasonable facsimile of Rosmersholm, according to the reviewer.

> . . . "The Black Cat" is nothing more or less than an Ibsen play "up to date." It is just the story of Beata, Rebecca West, and Rosmer [sic] of "Rosmersholm," adapted, modernised, and very appropriately "framed" in, say, the Melbury Road.
>
> (January, 1894, 51)

The critic was aware that the principles and motives of the play had been "weakened" by their Anglicization, but the English version had, like its Norwegian counterpart, left the audience "groping in a similar mist of bewilderment."

W. A. Lewis Bettany in a contribution to the May, 1894, issue attempted to appraise the results of the "'New Drama'" which he termed a "misleading, if convenient cant phrase." Seemingly, according to Bettany, it referred to "a (supposed) general renascence in the English theatre in these latter times." Bettany pointed out that the term as used included such playwrights as Ibsen, Stevenson, Pinero, Wilde, F. C. Philips, Mrs. Campbell Praed, H. A. Jones, George Moore, Bernard Shaw, and others. On the basis of this catholicity--acknowledged by the writer--Bettany found it possible to assert no one dramatist had been responsible for the regeneration of the drama. Said he, "Chronology alone refutes the fallacy; for long before 'A Doll's House' . . . long before 'The Profligate' . . . there had been signs

that the realistic decadent wave had reached our stage." Bettany credited Philips and Mrs. Praed with being the first exponents of the new movement in 1887 and 1888.

Bettany's reluctance to give credit to Ibsen for initiating the revolution in British drama led him to make some curiously contradictory statements.

> That the great Norwegian has influenced our stage, and influenced it profoundly, none but the veriest dolt would deny; but that his influence will be so preponderating as to ensure for his methods and subjects imitators among our leading dramatists is a contention that cannot for one moment be allowed. A little Ibsen, like a little yeast, goes a long way, and as a matter of fact, Mr. Jones is the only one of our prominent playwrights who has manifestly fallen under the Master's spell. True, faint echoes of "Ghosts" and "Hedda Gabler" may be heard in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," but nowhere save in Mr. Jones's "Judah" and "Crusaders," can conscious imitation of Ibsen be traced. Similarly with Mr. Pinero. The only two plays of recent birth that bear the impress of his methods are "The Pharisee" and "Mrs. Lessingham." . . . Both pieces, however, are inoculated by the Ibsen bacillus.
>
> (May, 1894, 240)

In his haste to take credit away from Ibsen, Bettany apparently overlooked the fact that while Philips and Mrs. Praed might have been the first to start the new trend, it had remained for Ibsen to give it the greatest impetus. One has the suspicion that Bettany might have been motivated by a blend of chauvinism and hatred of Ibsen.

After pronouncing judgement on the plays of the new school, Bettany arrived at the final decision that the dramatists had displayed a "glaring and fatal lack of proportion," manifest in their attaching too much importance to "sexual lapses" and in their "deliberate ascription of all the mischief supposed to result from these illicit

relationships to the man." However, one would like to question Bettany as to whether this statement applies to The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, a play in which not the man, but society in general is asked to search its heart and conscience.

The Watch-Tower of September, 1894, however, exhibited less reluctance to credit Ibsen with having had some influence on The Second Mrs. Tanqueray. Noting on the sixteenth anniversary of the magazine that a virtual revolution had occurred in stage literature, the Tower writer remarked that the Tower of 1878 had been unable to see the following changes:

> The entertaining author of The Magistrate, [Pinero] . . . was to write an English tragedy of momentous significance both dramatic and social. . . . A new foreign influence was to create a ferment of ideas to which this prodigy of native daring was partly due. The historian of 1878 could not foresee the irruption of Ibsen's social dramas, the fierce controversy between romantic ideals and the "problem play," the fitful eruptions of the Independent Theatre and the dramatic excursions of Mr. Bernard Shaw. Had anybody prophesied . . . that Paula Tanqueray would be licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, that her tragic story would be hailed as the highest achievement of the modern English dramatist, that it would be the object of sermons, . . . the echoes of August, 1878, might come to us with a burden of playful derision.
>
> (September, 1894, 90)

Continuing its discussion of Ibsen, the Tower rightly observed that the Norwegian "in his unmitigated form," might be unpopular with theatre audiences, but this fact was not to be taken as a measure of his merit. Significantly, it was the Tower's observation that "flashes of insight" and other potent and haunting snatches remained in the mind long after the initial feelings of "repugnance" had dimmed. Then, again, the Tower called attention to the fact that the Ibsen plays had inspired

great performances. Hence, the writer concluded, "It may not be hopelessly heretical to suggest that Ibsen has impregnated our dramatic atmosphere, not with his theories of life and conduct, but with a certain independence of view and directness of method." As further proof, the Tower adduced the popular reception of The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, in which the audience had been invited to accept "a dangerous province of realism" in the native drama.

Another of Ibsen's symbolic excursions was presented by the Independent Theatre in May of that same year. The Wild Duck was described by its reviewer as "obscure." "It is obviously symbolical. But of what?" he asked in honest perplexity. He suggested that in the future Grein issue "an official 'Digest' of the play," so that the unperceiving might be enlightened. Setting aside the symbolism, the critic considered the play "endurable and even interesting," by virtue of the portrayal of Hjalmar, Gina, and Hedvig. However, he seems to have missed the point of the play.

> That Truth is a beautiful thing he manifests in the ruin of the happiness of this family by bringing among them a staunch truth telller [sic], and by making this uncompromising idealist . . . the most woefully defeated of all by the very achievement of his victory.
>
> (June, 1894, 330)

An actor, famous as an exponent of Ibsen drama, contributed an interesting paper on his experiences in connection with the productions of A Doll's House and The Master Builder. Herbert Waring confessed that it had taken several readings of the plays to reveal the subtleties of character and dialogue. He termed his performances "a labour of love," but did not regard himself as an Ibsenite. He was in accord with other critics who had attributed the creation of The Second Mrs.

Tanqueray to Ibsen's influence. He thought that a study of Pinero's method would clearly disclose the Ibsen pattern. However, he thought that a piece modeled exactly according to the Norwegian would fail to achieve "permanent favour." It was Waring's conviction that Ibsen's great failing had been to exclude such qualities as "heroism, chivalry, chastity, and self-sacrifice," from virtually all of his characters. For this reason Waring thought that Ibsen had not written "'for all time.'"(October, 1894, 169)

Interest in the controversial Norwegian dramatist was barely kept alive in The Theatre in 1895. E. J. Goodman contributed an article on "Ibsen at Christiania," in which, among other things, Ibsen was described as "pleased, but a little surprised," to hear how much influence he had had on the English stage. (September, 1895, 146-149) In the same year, Echoes from the Green Room reviewed the Archer translation of Ibsen's latest piece, Little Eyolf, published in book form. The writer regarded the new play as more understandable than The Master Builder, but found that the play had left a distasteful general impression. He thought that the playwright had written some stageworthy scenes and that the plot had been developed "with marvellous skill, considering the nature of his material." (February, 1896, 121-122)

However, if interest in Ibsen himself had declined in 1895, the issue of the modern society play which he had inspired to a great extent, was very much alive. The Watch-Tower of January, 1895, showed strong disapproval of those who were resisting the new drama on grounds of its unwholesomeness.

> . . . The worthy people who have unbosomed their alarms . . . cannot understand that the business of a dramatist is not to see eye to eye with them in his outlook on life. If he takes a larger view than theirs, it does not follow that he is in league with a manager to corrupt the community. . . . We should come to a pretty pass indeed were these uneducated criticisms taken as a mandate of public opinion, based on the judgment of a citizen who escapes from excess thought to the music hall, or who supplies the playwright with a list of sins suitable for decorous treatment.
>
> (January, 1895, 2)

The Watch-Tower also gave an answer to a Mr. Traill, who had asserted in the Nineteenth Century that the realistic drama was not true to life because "in actual life" family "skeletons" were kept well hidden.

> Drama which does indeed mirror our motives and actions is a rare and difficult achievement, from which no artist ought to be intimidated by that bold assertion that we have had enough of it, or that skeletons do not take the air in public, or that, if they do, it is most immoral to bring them on the stage. That sort of criticism, were it carried on with much success, would cramp and eventually ruin any art that aims at truth.
>
> (January, 1895, 4)

In the same issue Clement Scott was still pleading for the drama that might be described as higher than reality.

> In a word, this drama of ours, this drama that we love, this drama that may give such hope, such joy, and such ennobling ambition to the best natures of man and woman alike; this drama, that may encourage so much discontent, but may also touch the fountain of so many tears, should paint not a baser, or a coarser, or a more hopeless, or more despairing world than the one in which we live--<u>but a possible better world</u>.
>
> (January, 1895, 10)

Nor was Scott alone in his opposition to the new trend in plays. In February, 1895, George Manville Fenn questioned the policy of managers who were producing comedies "of the Dumas <u>fils</u> type" and thus

repelling "so many of their old patrons." Fenn wrote wistfully of the old Robertsonian comedy which he described enthusiastically as "wholesome and refreshing." It was Fenn's belief that the ordinary playgoers, not the audiences which were in attendance "for the first few nights," had little liking for the "morbid psychology of Ibsen" or for "the over-strained, sickly sentiment of the modern French school."

> The ordinary playgoer is no whining moralist; he is simply a straightforward Englishman, who honestly says: "I will not take wife or daughter of mine to a theatre to see pieces that ought never to have been put upon the stage." I grant their cleverness and the great ability of the artists who delineate the characters but I am old-fashioned enough to regret the change that has taken place during the last few years, both in our library and dramatic literature.
> (February, 1895, 75)

In Fenn's opinion the purpose of a theatre was only to amuse, not to teach its patrons.

In the following month R. C. Carton also extolled Tom Robertson. Carton phrased his eulogy in these words:

> In any event it would be difficult to deny that he was the first English dramatist who attempted to prove, and who did prove, I contend, that no divorce need exist between sentiment and realism. I know the followers of Zola and Ibsen have attempted to annex the latter word. But I dispute the validity of their claim. True realism . . . is the effort to give faithful portrayal to life, or rather to a small portion of it. Now, when such portraiture is applied to an average English home, how is fidelity to be obtained if the element of simple-hearted sentiment is excluded or undervalued?
> (March, 1895, 155)

As for sentiment, Carton declared that the "'play of the century'"--_The Second Mrs. Tanqueray_--"positively reeked of delicate sentiment." If such a well-regarded play could contain so much of it, Carton

reasoned, why should other "far less pretentious" pieces reject it? Asked the writer,

> Is the purely domestic side of latter-day English life to remain unchronicled? Are all the plays that deal with homely pathos and natural humour to be finally "fairy tales," or relegated to "the confectioner's "?
>
> (March, 1895, 156)

Carton expressed his willingness for William Archer--whom he described as "a worthy adversary"--and his followers to have their Independent Theatre, but he pleaded for one theatre which would cater to those with a taste for the Robertsonian type of comedy. According to the writer, the venture would succeed financially, "because no moderately good play of the Robertsonian genre has ever failed to prove superlatively attractive."

The pleas of the last three writers confirm a statement made by Nicoll about the slowness of the British public to "throw over Clement Scott and accept William Archer as their teacher."[10] Nicoll gives this evaluation of Robertson's contribution to British drama:

> It is not what Robertson did that makes him a forerunner of modern drama, but his tentative methods of looking at life. . . . Robertson showed men that ordinary life could be brought into the theatre for the good both of drama and of spectators; that the problems of social existence were clamoring for expression in literary form.[11]

However, Nicoll points out that Robertson had made only a beginning in the direction of dramatic realism, nor did those who followed him

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[10] A. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 356.

[11] Ibid., p. 348.

break new ground in this field. "Robertson himself did not carry his work very far; sentimentalism ever stayed his hand; and the majority of his immediate successors and of his contemporaries refused to move very far from the even path he had trodden out for himself."[12]

Thus it can be seen that Scott and his adherents were willing to accept realism of only a somewhat limited kind, and that they wanted their realism sweetened with a heaping portion of sentimentality.

In 1896, W. Davenport Adams related to the readers the attitudes of the renowned French critic, Sarcey, toward Ibsenism. Sarcey was characterized as unfavorably disposed toward the Norwegian. Adams declared, "I am only regretting that M. Sarcey should have become so wedded to the method of Scribe, of Dumas, of Sardou, that he cannot recognise, or will not acknowledge, the freshness, the utility, the charm of the method of Ibsen." (July, 1896, 19-24)

In the same year a pessimistic--but highly emotional--dramatist, Robert Buchanan, vented his spleen upon what he called the "quidnuncs." Largely due to their ill-advised efforts Buchanan proclaimed that "serious dramatic art" was dead.

> So sick has the public grown of the very idea of edification, so absurd have been proved the pretensions of those dramatists who foolishly followed where the quidnuncs led, that the hope of a rational drama, dealing with the great issues of modern life, has been adjourned sine die, and the very phrase "problem play" is already a term of managerial as well as critical execration.
>
> (October, 1896, 208)

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[12] Ibid., p. 349.

On the other hand, Buchanan was no supporter of Ibsen. Yet he thought that a happy mean could be found somewhere between "the ethics of the Lock Hospital and the empirics of Bank Holiday tumblings in the hay." Consequently, he thought "a great opportunity" had been lost, for which he blamed the critics. According to Buchanan, the "bewildered dramatist" knew not what to do--a distressing indication of the weak spirit of the playwrights of this period, if Buchanan is to be believed.

In 1896, Ibsen returned once again to the London stage. Little Eyolf was produced at the Avenue Theatre, the translation being Archer's. The unknown critic gave it a caustic reception. He started out thus: "It may be that within the folds of Little Eyolf there lurks an infinity of undiscovered and undiscoverable meanings." Still, approached from "the obvious and commonsense standpoint," the play could only be considered a "dull, wordy, unpleasant, and prodigiously tiresome play which no healthily-minded person would care to see a second, if indeed a first, time." He blamed Ibsen for failing to make his purpose clearer. The acting was regarded as brilliant, however. (January, 1897, 40-41)

Echoes from the Green Room in February, 1897, gave the readers a brief book review of Ibsen's new play, John Gabriel Borkman. Echoes declared the play to be "melancholy" and "pessimistic" in its tone, but thought the "dramatic construction and development" commendable. (February, 1897, 118)

The March number ran a parody of John Gabriel Borkman written by Malcolm Watson and entitled Pretty Fanny's Ways. (March, 1897, 137-142)

In May, Echoes from the Green Room announced the assembling of an exceptionally fine cast for the forthcoming production of John Gabriel Borkman. However, though the writer could understand the Norwegian's allure for actors and actresses, "because he understands so well l' art du théatre," he thought that Ibsen could have written some "really good stage pieces" if he hadn't been led by his adulators into thinking of himself as "a philosopher and a great reformer." Clearly, some people could not reconcile themselves to Ibsen even at this late date.

The production of John Gabriel Borkman, translated by Archer, made its debut at the Strand Theatre in May. The reviewer showed it little clemency.

> It is dull, tedious, depressing, at times even ludicrous. The writer's views of life remain unchanged. The lightness and sweetness to be found in the world be persistently ignores; towards what is mean and ignoble he is drawn as inevitably as the needle to the pole. . . . [The play shows] how entirely out of touch with the progressive tendencies of the modern drama Ibsen still remains.
>
> (June, 1897, 135-136)

The critic conceded that there were "one or two powerful scenes," however. This time he did not give the players his unqualified praise.

This chapter has made a critical survey of the effects of Ibsen and his social dramas upon the British theatre. As Max Beerbohm has pointed out, there was "much that was foolish" said by those who espoused the cause of the realistic drama and those who opposed it. From the study just completed it is clear that the Ibsen drama un-

diluted, was not well received by the average British playgoer, but--more important--the efforts of English dramatists, patterned after Ibsenian realism, were enthusiastically accepted. Thus Ibsen had given the new school of native drama its great impetus. As Nicoll observes:

> With the treatment of domestic scene and of social problems he [Ibsen] introduced a new frankness, which at first grated harshly on the ears of prudish Victorians accustomed to the pleasing commonplaces of Tennysonian melody. Here they found a man who dared to speak of things they deemed unspeakable, who laid bare the most festering sores in the body social, who flinched from nothing in his Olympian grandeur. Soon their detestation of this frankness began to wane. . . . native writers began to attempt imitations of the Ibsen style. This frankness meant the opening up of new worlds for the dramatists . . . . and in dealing with those aspects of social life came to them new ideas and new conceptions of the meaning of the universe.[13]

During the years of the controversy over Ibsen, The Theatre magazine mirrored the variegated opinions aroused by the Norwegian. However, it must be said that the most fervent followers of Ibsen, such as Archer, were not heard from in the periodical after 1889. It is to be regretted that they were not, but the magazine carried the contributions of other Ibsenites, so that a fairly good balance of comment was achieved.

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[13] Ibid., pp. 340-341.

SUMMARY

The present investigation has confirmed Robert W. Lowe's estimate in 1888 of The Theatre magazine as "one of the most valuable of dramatic records." Founded originally as a weekly "critical review," The Theatre was converted to a monthly magazine in August, 1878, with the subtitle, "A Monthly Review and Magazine." During the years 1880 to 1893 its subtitle became "A Monthly Review of the Drama, Music, and the Fine Arts." Throughout its lifetime the periodical's focus was consistently on the stage in all of its aspects: the audience, personalities, management, drama, critics and criticism, and history. While The Theatre concerned itself chiefly with the ramifications of British dramatic art, nevertheless it did not fail to furnish its readers with information about the drama as treated in foreign countries throughout the world.

The salient features of the magazine varied according to the editors, but the following were customarily found in the course of the magazine's career: photographs and biographies of theatrical personalities; data and reviews of plays and musical productions; feature articles on the various aspects of theatrical art; editorial comment; fiction; and news items about theatre personalities. The tone of the feature articles ranged from the facetious and petulant to the scholarly. Two very valuable assets of the magazine were the high calibre of the contributors and the impartial coverage of controversial issues of which there were many during its lifetime. Those

writing for the magazine were the most highly respected actors, critics, playwrights, and theatrical historians of their time. Such men as Joseph Knight, Henry Irving, Frank Marshall, A. W. Pinero, J. T. Grein, W. S. Gilbert, Tom Taylor, W. Davenport Adams, Moy Thomas, William Archer, Lewis Carroll, and Herbert Beerbohm Tree wrote papers for the magazine. Generally speaking, the papers maintained a high quality, but there were some which fell below the customary standards.

During The Theatre's career as a monthly magazine there were at least seven editors who served for varying lengths of time. Frederick W. Hawkins, a journalist and theatrical historian, served from August, 1878, to December, 1879. He was succeeded by Clement William Scott, the most influential dramatic critic of his day, who edited the magazine from January, 1880 to December, 1889. In January, 1890, Bernard E. J. Capes followed Scott into the editor's post and remained there until June, 1892; Capes had a co-editor, Charles Eglington, from July, 1890, to June, 1892. Eglington was sole editor from July, 1892, to June, 1893, and was succeeded by Addison Bright, a young critic. Bright held his post from July, 1893, to July, 1894, when Eglington again resumed the editorial duties. It is presumed that Eglington served in this capacity until the demise of the magazine in December, 1897, although the editor's name was not published in the masthead after July, 1894.

The years during which The Theatre flourished saw numerous changes in the composition and attitudes of British audiences. Greater numbers of patrons began to attend the theatres, for the long-standing prejudice against the acted drama was crumbling during this era. However, the playgoers of the period were far from well-behaved, and

though the writers of the magazine worked hard to effect certain needed reforms, their efforts seemingly were to little avail. The pit, in particular, posed special problems during these years. Another pressing problem involved the issuing of orders, or complimentary tickets to playgoers.

Certain aspects of playwriting also troubled the magazine's writers. The most important was the noticeable dearth in native dramatic talent and the perceptible preëminence of French adaptations upon the English stage. Another question which evoked much comment was the propriety of billing adaptations as "new" productions.

The intrinsic worth and basic practicality of two proposed measures of reform for the British stage were debated at length in the pages of The Theatre. Agitation for the establishment of a National Theatre, patterned after the French, and for the founding of a Dramatic Academy, were motivated by the desire to raise the quality of acting, to ensure the performance of dramatic masterpieces, and to raise the professional standing of the player. Opposition to the two movements was usually based upon the impracticalities of the proposed schemes.

The Theatre also displayed a keen awareness of the relations of the Stage with four powerful social institutions--the Church, Government Censorship, the Press, and Society. The periodical witnessed and faithfully recorded the improved relations between the Church and the Stage, signalized not only by increasing tolerance toward the drama, but also by the growing numbers of Church officials who became playgoers. The social, legal, and professional status of the player took a decided upward turn during this same period. Prominent

players were recruited from the ranks of the well-educated and the well-bred, and were also accepted by the members of fashionable society. Perhaps the most significant token of the rising prestige of the actor was the conferring of the first knighthood ever given to one of that profession on Henry Irving in 1895. The magazine was careful, however, to remind the actors and actresses that their heightened social and professional standing demanded a sense of social responsibility in return.

The merits and disadvantages of government censorship were also questioned during this era. Whatever its merits, it seems to be a fact that the censor, or the Examiner of Plays, did very little to impede the progress made in dramatic writing at this time.

Relations between the Press as represented by the dramatic critics and the Stage, however, did not run as smoothly as they might have done. Disgruntled and resentful playwrights aired their grievances against the critics in the magazine, and the critics retaliated with their tales of woe. From 1889 on, the bitter battle between the New Critics and the Old Critics enlivened the pages of The Theatre. At issue were the drama of Ibsenian realism and stage conventionality. The New Critics were more interested in the script of a play, whereas their opponents were more concerned over the acting of a play. The two schools differed also in style of writing criticism and, more significantly, in their ideas of the purposes of the drama and of theatrical criticism. Another highly controversial issue raised in the magazine was the propriety of a critic's writing plays, thus functioning in two conflicting capacities in the same field.

Probably the most significant change of all those recorded by The Theatre was that in dramatic writing. Whether it was acknowledged or not, British drama was given its greatest impetus in the nineteenth century by the Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen. Although the social dramas and later the symbolic dramas of Ibsen were not accepted by the general playgoing public in England, nevertheless these audiences found that after a dose of potent Ibsenian realism, the well-made play and the sensational melodrama had palled on them. Ibsen's strong treatment of the social ills of his day repulsed the conventional playgoer, who found the British versions of the drama with a thesis more palatable. It remained, therefore, for Arthur Wing Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones and other native dramatists to concoct less astringent potions to serve to the public. British audiences discovered that the English versions of the realistic drama like the highly acclaimed The Second Mrs. Tanqueray could be at once thought-provoking and entertaining. It was demonstrated conclusively that one could go to the theatre not only to feel, but also to think, and be pleasurably entertained all the while. The Theatre saw only the beginning of the revolution in British drama, for the Galsworthies and the Shaws were to flower in the early years of the twentieth century. The magazine had, however, recorded the progress of the revolution through its most critical stages.

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Helene HarLin Wong was born in Honolulu, Hawaii, and attended private schools there, graduating from Punahou School in 1938. She attended Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, for one year, and graduated from Stanford University, California, with a B.A. in speech and drama. She received her M.A. in speech and drama from Stanford University, California, in 1947. She has also taken graduate courses at the University of Hawaii. She is a regular member of the Speech Department of the University of Hawaii. She is a candidate for the Ph.D. degree from Louisiana State University in August, 1956.

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Major Field: Speech

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Approved:

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